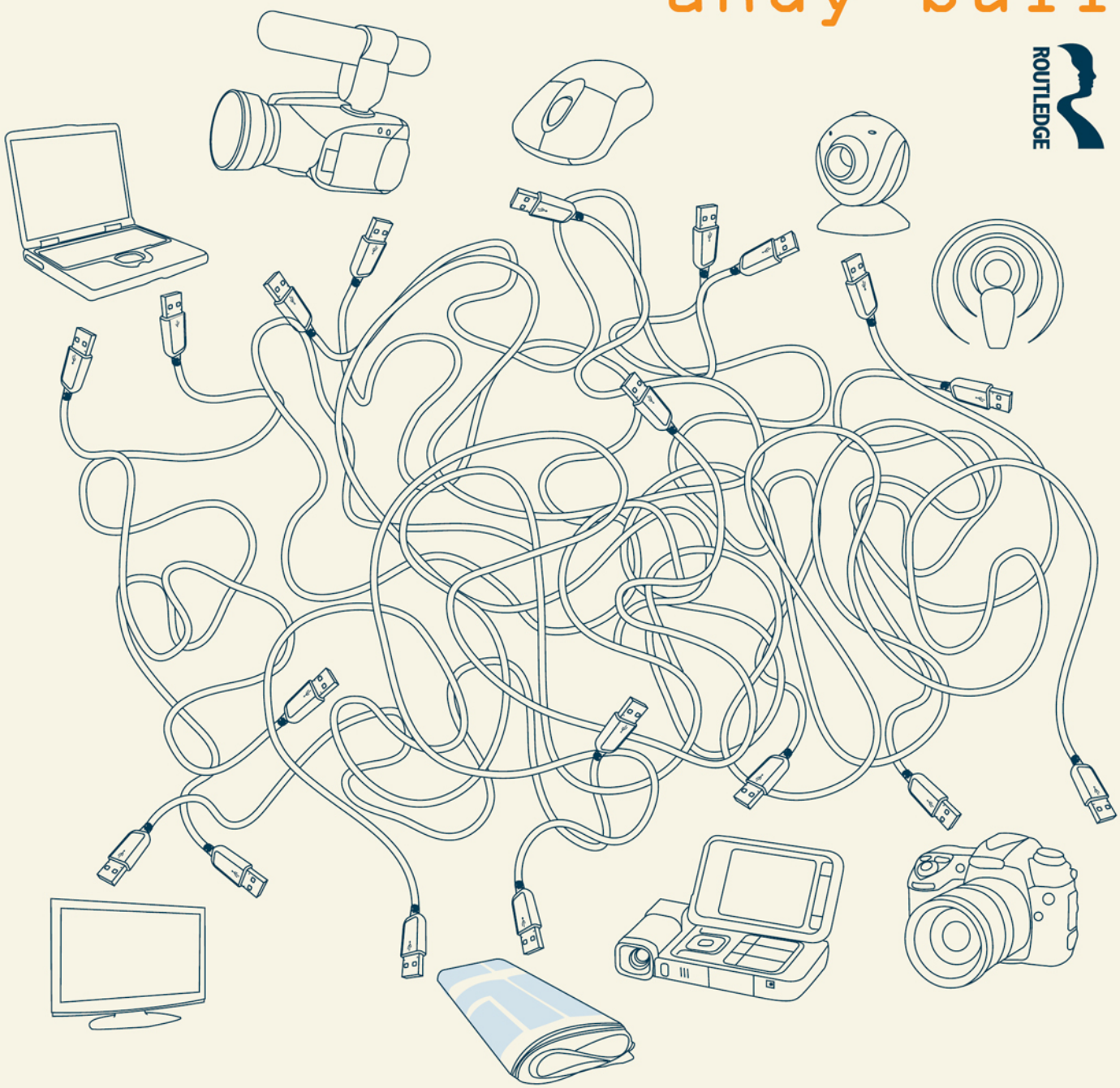
andy bull

ROUTLEDGE



# Multimedia Journalism

## a practical guide

# Multimedia Journalism

*Multimedia Journalism: A Practical Guide* offers clear advice on working across multiple media platforms and includes guides to creating and using video, audio, text and pictures.

This textbook contains all the essentials of good practice and is supported by an immersive website, at www.multimedia-journalism.co.uk, which demonstrates how to apply the skills covered in the book, gives examples of good and bad practice, and keeps the material constantly up to date and in line with hardware, software, methods of working and legislation as they change. The book is fully cross-referenced and interlinked with the website.

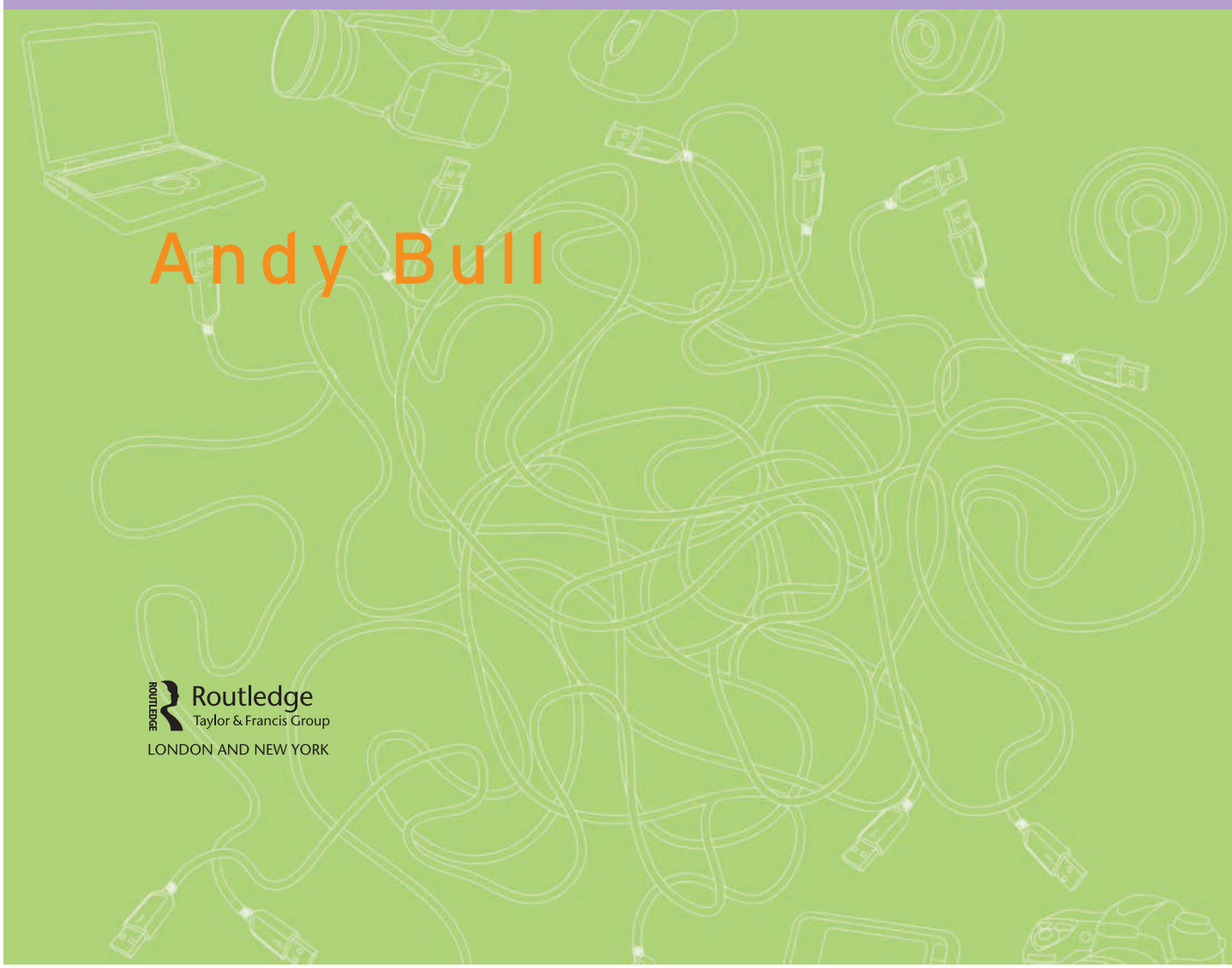
Split into three levels – getting started, building proficiency and professional standards – this book builds on the knowledge attained in each part, and ensures that skills are introduced one step at a time until professional competency is achieved. This three-stage structure means it can be used from initial to advanced level to learn the key skill areas of video, audio, text and pictures and how to combine them to create multimedia packages. Skills covered include:

- Writing news reports, features, email bulletins and blogs
- Building a website using a content management system
- Measuring the success of your website or blog
- Shooting, cropping, editing and captioning pictures
- Recording, editing and publishing audio reports and podcasts
- Shooting and editing video, creating effective packages and streaming live reports
- Using and encouraging user-generated content
- Interviewing and conducting advanced online research
- Sub-editing, proofreading and headlining, including search engine optimisation
- Geotagging, geocoding and geo-broadcasting
- Scripting and presenting bulletins.

**Andy Bull** has written syllabuses for the NCTJ in Online, Magazine and Financial Journalism and in Sports Reporting and has been a core tutor on the Periodical Training Council accredited Postgraduate Diploma in Magazine Journalism run by PMA Media Training in London. He has been a journalist for 30 years and has had senior roles on the *Independent*, *The Times*, the *Mail on Sunday* and the *Sunday Express*. He edited the Times Online and was editorial director of AOL UK. He is now a freelance editor, writer, author and tutor.

# Multimedia Journalism

## A Practical Guide



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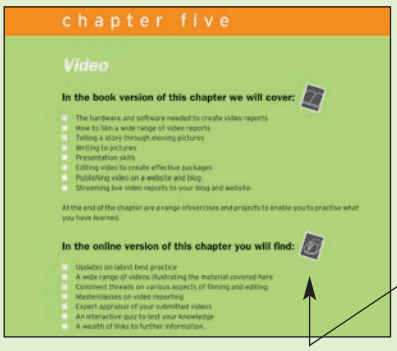
# Guided tour

## Multimedia in content; multimedia in form

*Multimedia Journalism: A Practical Guide* isn't just the book in your hands – it's a website too, featuring tons of audio, visual and textual material. At **www.multimedia-journalism.co.uk** you'll find fully cross-referenced material that links with and builds on the book material, keeps it current, and is updated regularly.



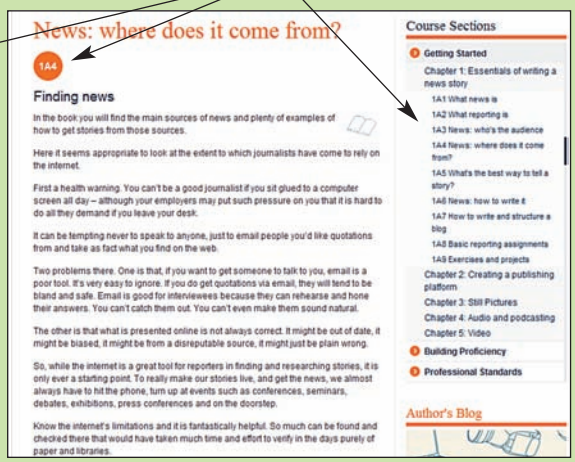

At the start of each chapter in the book, and online, you'll see a summary of what's in each version.

You can comment on what you've read on each page.

Boxes throughout the book chapter will direct you to related material online.

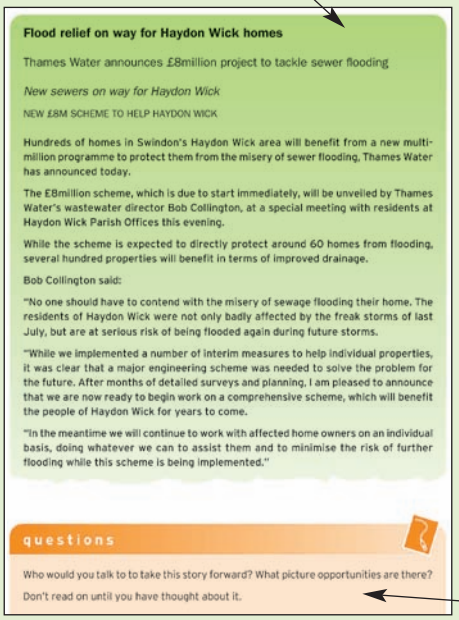
Each chapter is split into sections that are numbered and coded so you can go directly to the relevant area of the website, or book, and back again.

on the website
Test your understanding of targeting news at an audience with our interactive quiz
See what the author, media experts and other students have to say about multi-media reporting, and add your comments
1A4
News: where does it come from?
So how do you find news? Most stories start from an initial germ of an idea, and need following up. A press release, for example, should be the start of a reporter's quest for a story, not the end.
We take the initial piece of information and we add to it. We find out more, we look for updates, more interesting angles, we talk to those involved, we go along to an event, get pictures, video, audio where appropriate.
Let's look at some stories and see where they came from
Here are three stories from the front page of the BBC News website on one particular day.
1 Here's a story about a murder
Youth 'brutally' killed in park
A murder inquiry has been launched after the battered body of a teenager was found in a park in West Yorkshire.
Detectives said the youth, aged 17 or 18, was found in Crow Nest Park in Dewsbury


News: where does it come from?
1A4
Finding news
In the book you will find the main sources of news and plenty of examples of how to get stories from those sources.
Here it seems appropriate to look at the extent to which journalists have come to rely on the internet.
First a health warning. You can't be a good journalist if you sit glued to a computer screen all day – although your employers may put such pressure on you that it is hard to do all they demand if you leave your desk.
It can be tempting never to speak to anyone, just to email people you'd like quotations from and take as fact what you find on the web.
Two problems there. One is that, if you want to get someone to talk to you, email is a poor tool. It's very easy to ignore. If you do get quotations via email, they will tend to be bland and safe. Email is good for interviewees because they can rehearse and hone their answers. You can't catch them out. You can't even make them sound natural.
The other is that what is presented online is not always correct. It might be out of date, it might be biased, it might be from a disreputable source, it might just be plain wrong.
So, while the internet is a great tool for reporters in finding and researching stories, it is only ever a starting point. To really make our stories live, and get the news, we almost always have to hit the phone, turn up at events such as conferences, seminars, debates, exhibitions, press conferences and on the doorstep.
Know the internet's limitations and it is fantastically helpful. So much can be found and checked there that would have taken much time and effort to verify in the days purely of paper and libraries.
Course Sections
Getting Started
Chapter 1: Essentials of writing a news story
1A1 What news is
1A2 What reporting is
1A3 News: who's the audience
1A4 News: where does it come from?
1A5 What's the best way to tell a story?
1A6 News: how to write it
1A7 How to write and structure a blog
1A8 Basic reporting assignments
1A9 Exercises and projects
Chapter 2: Creating a publishing platform
Chapter 3: Still Pictures
Chapter 4: Audio and podcasting
Chapter 5: Video
Building Proficiency
Professional Standards
Author's Blog

Keep up to date by reading the Multimedia Journalism blog, and receive feeds.

In the textbook, green boxes highlight real story examples.



**Flood relief on way for Haydon Wick homes**

Thames Water announces £8million project to tackle sewer flooding

*New sewers on way for Haydon Wick*

NEW £8M SCHEME TO HELP HAYDON WICK

Hundreds of homes in Swindon's Haydon Wick area will benefit from a new multi-million programme to protect them from the misery of sewer flooding, Thames Water has announced today.

The £8million scheme, which is due to start immediately, will be unveiled by Thames Water's wastewater director Bob Collington, at a special meeting with residents at Haydon Wick Parish Offices this evening.

While the scheme is expected to directly protect around 60 homes from flooding, several hundred properties will benefit in terms of improved drainage.

Bob Collington said:

"No one should have to contend with the misery of sewage flooding their home. The residents of Haydon Wick were not only badly affected by the freak storms of last July, but are at serious risk of being flooded again during future storms.

"While we implemented a number of interim measures to help individual properties, it was clear that a major engineering scheme was needed to solve the problem for the future. After months of detailed surveys and planning, I am pleased to announce that we are now ready to begin work on a comprehensive scheme, which will benefit the people of Haydon Wick for years to come.

"In the meantime we will continue to work with affected home owners on an individual basis, doing whatever we can to assist them and to minimise the risk of further flooding while this scheme is being implemented."

questions

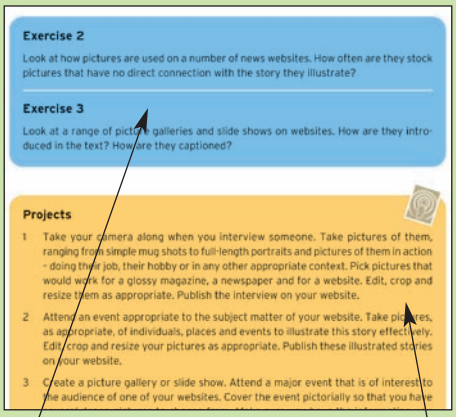
Who would you talk to to take this story forward? What picture opportunities are there?

Don't read on until you have thought about it.

Take online quizzes to test your knowledge, and use the site to keep up to date with jobs and the news.

Question boxes prompt you to think about what you've read before you move on.

At the end of each chapter in the book you'll find exercises and projects.



**Exercise 2**

Look at how pictures are used on a number of news websites. How often are they stock pictures that have no direct connection with the story they illustrate?

**Exercise 3**

Look at a range of picture galleries and slide shows on websites. How are they introduced in the text? How are they captioned?

**Projects**

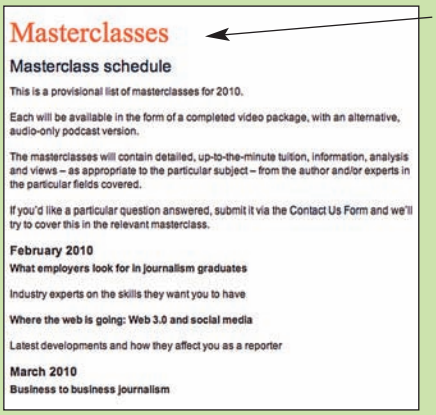
1 Take your camera along when you interview someone. Take pictures of them, ranging from simple mug shots to full-length portraits and pictures of them in action - doing their job, their hobby or in any other appropriate context. Pick pictures that would work for a glossy magazine, a newspaper and for a website. Edit, crop and resize them as appropriate. Publish the interview on your website.

2 Attend an event appropriate to the subject matter of your website. Take pictures, as appropriate, of individuals, places and events to illustrate this story effectively. Edit, crop and resize your pictures as appropriate. Publish these illustrated stories on your website.

3 Create a picture gallery or slide show. Attend a major event that is of interest to the audience of one of your websites. Cover the event pictorially so that you have

Exercises relate directly to material covered in the chapter.

Projects are wider, longer-term enterprises that you will be able to develop as you work your way through the book and website.



**Masterclasses**

**Masterclass schedule**

This is a provisional list of masterclasses for 2010.

Each will be available in the form of a completed video package, with an alternative, audio-only podcast version.

The masterclasses will contain detailed, up-to-the-minute tuition, information, analysis and views – as appropriate to the particular subject – from the author and/or experts in the particular fields covered.

If you'd like a particular question answered, submit it via the Contact Us Form and we'll try to cover this in the relevant masterclass.

**February 2010**

**What employers look for in journalism graduates**

Industry experts on the skills they want you to have

**Where the web is going: Web 3.0 and social media**

Latest developments and how they affect you as a reporter

**March 2010**

**Business to business journalism**

Look out for regular masterclasses from the author and experts in the particular fields covered; a range of topics in both video and audio form. Check the masterclasses tab on the site to see what's coming up and send us your questions in advance.

You'll find loads of video and audio throughout. It's a truly multimedia project!

# General introduction

## *What* Multimedia Journalism *is all about*

If *Multimedia Journalism* was just the book you hold in your hands, it would have two fundamental things wrong with it. For one thing, it could not be a completely up-to-date account of all the latest software and hardware available to the multimedia journalist. It would go out of date almost as fast as I wrote it. For another, it would be impossible to rely solely on the print medium to effectively describe and demonstrate all that multimedia storytelling involves. That would be like trying to describe a glorious sunset to the blind, or incredible music to the deaf. That's why this paper print-out is just one part of the package. The companion website forms the other half of the whole, and the two are interdependent.

The website is there to do several important things. It will:

- Enable me to demonstrate all aspects of multimedia journalism in their native environment
- Keep up with the very latest developments in hardware and software
- Allow information, advice, links and all other content to be updated as soon as that becomes necessary
- Allow a dialogue to develop with readers
- Bring a community of readers together.

But I'm certainly not saying you can dispense with the book. The print medium still has incredible strengths, even with the options of audio and still and moving images at our disposal. Print may be static, but it is great for getting across detail and complex analysis, and for explaining matters in a way that sticks in the mind. So the book concentrates on the fundamentals of good journalism. These fundamentals, the principles of reporting – of storytelling – do not change. They don't go out of date and they are common across all media.

## So what are we going to learn to do?

This package will take you from day one to graduation. It will give you everything you need to know to develop as a fully rounded multimedia journalist. It will start by assuming absolutely no knowledge or experience, and accompany you through to full competence: the level of competence required to graduate from a practical undergraduate or postgraduate journalism course. It will take you through the practice of reporting – of storytelling – in text, sound, still and moving images. It will take you through the modern news-gathering process from idea to publication.

## Joint Journalism Training Forum

The book and website have been designed to follow all the journalistic requirements of courses that follow the content recommendations of the Joint Journalism Training Forum (JJTF). That body, founded in November 2008, is a collective venture of three accrediting bodies: the Broadcast Journalism Training Council (BJTC), which specialises in broadcast skills, the Periodical Training Council (PTC), which focuses on magazines, and the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ), which focuses on local newspaper journalism.

These three journalism accrediting organisations have been working together on common core multimedia journalism skills. At the time of writing, the JJTF was engaged in a widespread consultation on the requirements of courses it is to accredit. Its latest outline of requirements is this:

- Basic IT and internet skills – competences in keyboard skills and internet use for data searching and communication, blogging or other web-based narrative construction, and basic specialist software
- Basic online production techniques, including sound and video recording and editing
- Awareness of online sites – news platforms, social websites, basic search engines, brand extensions
- Basic ability to write web text, articles, blogs, SMS and picture captions
- Basic ability to write for audio and video
- Ability to re-version and re-purpose, use links, moderate and manage user-generated content for different platforms, organisations and purposes
- Appreciation of the differences between professional journalism and citizen journalism or blogging, such as truth, accuracy, checking, public interest and responsibility
- Understanding of optimisation, e.g. for search engines, archiving, key words and tags, embedded coding, watermarking, click-stream data and story rating on sites like YouTube
- Understanding of how a multi-platform editorial team works, including the generation of ideas, presentation, commissioning, angle selection and treatments, work-flows, deadlines and priorities

- Understanding of choices and decisions facing the different platforms, including cross-media publications and 24-hour rolling news; how to manage your time to deliver on all those platforms, how to make the different angles for each platform stand out from each other and the competition
- Understanding of how to assemble news packages for the web and what makes for high-quality visual images and audio in telling and illustrating a story
- Ensuring the compliance of stories and information for publication on the web with legal and regulatory requirements
- Understanding of basic web layout and design, e.g. how to work in website templates, and the principles and aesthetics of web page design and construction
- Understanding of the different needs of voice, reading and presentation skills for different platforms and audiences
- Understanding of risk assessment, health and safety and hazardous assignments.

As the JJTF's requirements develop, the website that accompanies this book will be updated to take full account of them. It will also take account of the changes that the BJTC, PTC and NCTJ make to their individual syllabus requirements.

chapters


1 **Essentials of writing a news story**
2 **Creating a publishing platform**
3 **Still pictures**
4 **Audio and podcasting**
5 **Video**


part A

# *Getting started*

## Introduction: what multimedia journalism is

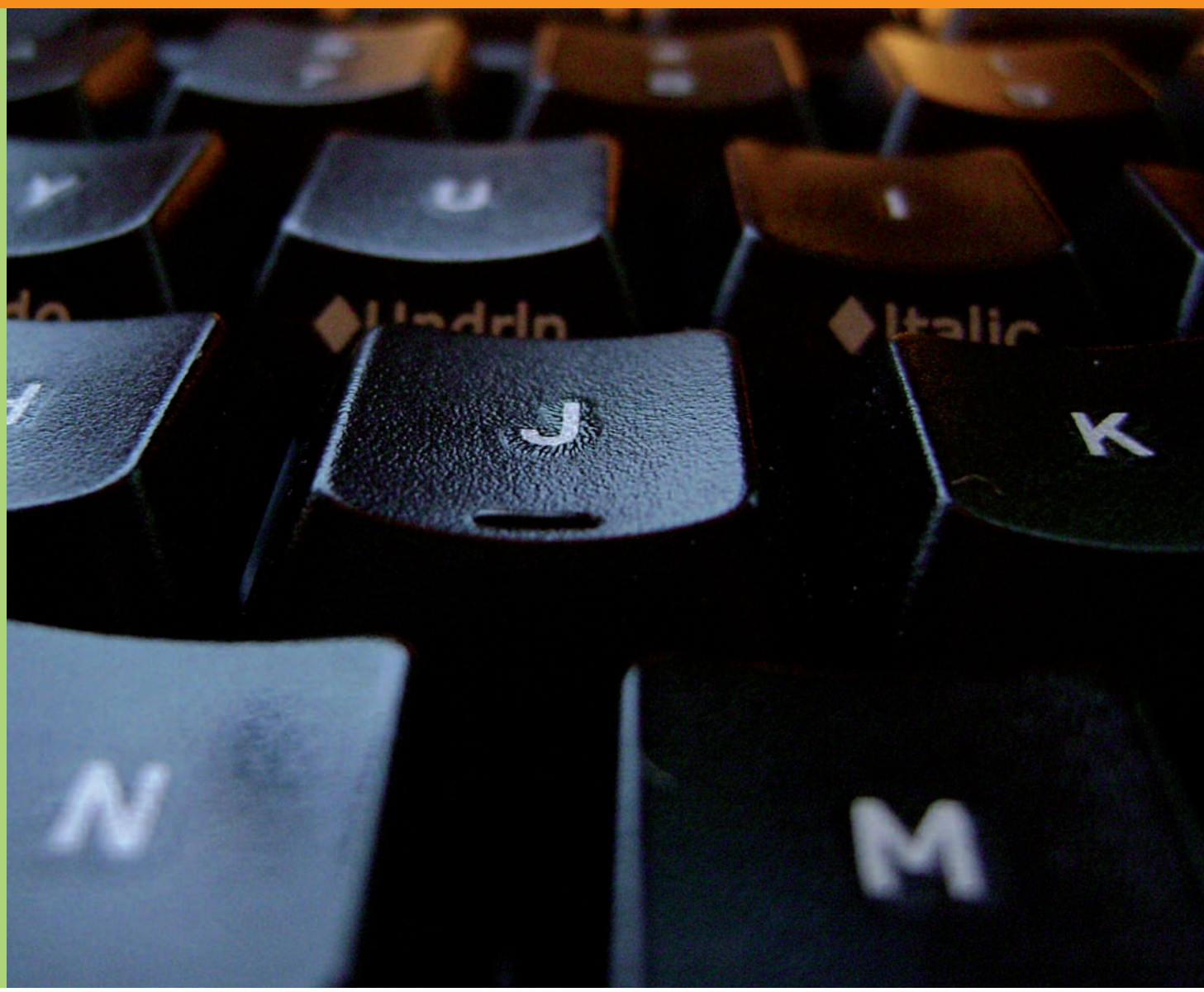
This part of *Multimedia Journalism* is called Getting started, and that's what we are going to do – straightaway. We won't spend a lot of time theorising about things. Instead, you'll jump straight in.

## Aims of this section

To give you core journalism skills and show you how to:

- Write a good basic news report
- Take good news pictures and create a still picture story
- Film and edit a video story
- Record and edit a podcast.

You'll master the basics of spotting, researching, writing, editing and publishing in each medium. And you'll create basic news websites, plus a blog, and publish text stories, picture stories, and video and audio packages to them.


J
K
N
M

chapter one

# *Essentials of writing a news story*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

- What news is
- What reporting is
- How to identify and serve a particular audience
- Where to find news
- How to write and structure a text-based news report
- Multimedia reporting – the effective use of text, still pictures, video and audio
- How to write a blog
- How to tackle a range of basic reporting assignments.

At the end of the chapter are a range of exercises and projects to enable you to practise what you have learned.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- Interactive quizzes to test your understanding of the principles of news gathering and writing
- A wide range of videos illustrating the material covered here
- Comment threads on various aspects of gathering and writing news
- Masterclasses on news reporting
- A wealth of links to further information.

1A1

## What news is

### Teenager dies after confronting attacker

A BOY of 16 died in his brother's arms yesterday after confronting a youth who was threatening staff in a baker's shop in south London.

(The Sunday Times, 11 May 2008)

News Site of the Year | The 2008 Newspaper Awards

TIMESONLINE

NEWS | COMMENT | BUSINESS | SPORT | LIFE & STYLE | ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Where am I? > Home > News > UK News > Crime News

From The Sunday Times

May 11, 2008

Teenager dies after confronting attacker

EXPLORE UK NEWS

TIMES RECOMMENDS

Steven Swinford and Brendan Montague

A boy of 16 died in his brother's arms yesterday after confronting a youth who was threatening staff in a baker's shop in south London.

That's news. It is clearly a tragic story, and very worrying. Here are some of the reasons we see it as news:

1 **It's new** – it has just happened, and we are learning about it for the first time.

2 **It's factual** – in that 25 word sentence, there are numerous facts.

### questions

Can you work out what the facts are?

List them before reading on.

Here are the facts covered:

- A boy
- aged 16
- died
- in his brother's arms
- yesterday
- after a confrontation
- with a youth
- threatening staff
- in a baker's shop
- in south London.

3 **It's about people** – that short first paragraph – known as an intro – drops us into a compelling human drama. We can picture the scene, and empathise with the characters in it.

4 **It's relevant to readers; it affects them** – in the immediate area this story will have had a great affect on people, but this was also a big national story. It affected most readers not because they were directly caught up in it but because it was shocking, and they felt great sympathy for the victim and his family. It also affected them because it probably made them feel a bit less safe – either for themselves or for their family.

5 **It's dramatic and out of the ordinary** – the amount written about an event can depend on how dramatic and out of the ordinary it is. In some inner city areas, a murder warrants only a couple of pars (paragraphs) on an inside page of the local paper. In a quiet rural area, it would probably be the lead – the main story on the front page. The difference in coverage reflects the extent to which such an event is relatively common or uncommon.

   This story was given great prominence because it involved a law-abiding young man who was completely blameless, and was attacked for no reason.

6 **It involves conflict** – a fatal attack involves a very high level of conflict.

So that gives us six things that tell us what news is.

Take a look at the next story. Is it news?

### IRA and UDA 'held secret talks'

Secret talks between the UDA and the Provisional and Official IRA 30 years ago have been revealed in confidential Cabinet papers. They have been made available under the 30 year rule.

(bbc.co.uk, 24 January 2005)

This story can hardly be called new – it happened 30 years ago. So how can it be defined as news under our item 1 above?

It's news because we have only just learned about it. So let's refine that first item and say:

> **News is new to our readers** – so it doesn't matter if an event happened a long time ago, or if some people know about it. As long as our readers don't, then it is news to them.

## *Here's another story*

NEWS OF THE WORLD
WWW.NOTW.CO.UK
Contact us | Bingo |
GRAVY PLANE
Freesy Jet
We fly... EU pay
EU blows millions on fact-finding freebies for MEPs
By Jamie Lyons & Guy Basnett
HIGH-FLYING British MEPs are jet-setting to holiday paradises for jaunts of unimaginable luxury—leaving cash-strapped taxpayers to pick up the bill.

HIGH-FLYING British MEPs are jet-setting to holiday paradises for jaunts of unimaginable luxury — leaving cash-strapped taxpayers to pick up the bill.

A News of the World investigation has uncovered the full extent of the multi-million-pound junkets to fabulous destinations like Bali, St Lucia, the Seychelles, Barbados and Australia.

(News of the World, 18 May 2008)

## questions

How many elements in our definition of news does it cover? Can you think of something else about it that means we should add another element to our definition of news?

Make your list, and decide what further element we may need to add to our definition, before reading on.

Here are the elements in our news definition that this story covers:

> This story is **new to the reader**, it's **factual**, it's **about people**. Its **relevance to the reader** has been pointed out within it. It might not be dramatic but it does disclose **events that are – or should be – out of the ordinary**. It doesn't involve dramatic conflict, but what it reveals is likely to annoy many who read it.

But is there something else about it that means we should add a new element to our definition of news?

Think about the junketing MEPs – would they rather this story had not been written? I think we can assume that they would. And that gives us another element often found in news stories.

> **News is something someone, somewhere, doesn't want you to report –** as is becoming apparent, not all stories fit every element in our definition of news. We will have to be a little flexible over this.

### *Here's a fourth story*

Is it news? Does it fit none, some or all of the elements in our definition of news?

**Our recent home page featured a request to help find George the cat.**

George had gone missing from his home in Upper Bush. He was spotted in the area of Charles Drive and James Road Thursday evening and Friday morning.

Following a leaflet drop by his owner, in the area, a resident of Ladywood Road reported that they had taken George in after finding him in their back garden.

George's owner is very grateful for the help of all those involved in George's safe return.

(Cuxton Parish Council newsletter, 20 April 2008)

This might not seem like the most exciting news, and it's not written in a way that makes the most of the story, but it is new, it is factual and it is about people. And a cat.

It's not dramatic or out of the ordinary and it doesn't involve conflict.

But does it *affect* people? And is it *relevant* to readers? Yes. It affects not just George's owner, but those who received leaflets about his disappearance, and the lady who found him. And, indirectly, it will affect cat owners who live in the area and can sympathise with the owner's anxiety, and relief that the pet was found.

A lot of stories aren't of earth-shattering importance, but that doesn't mean there isn't an audience for them. For example:

THE Sun

Friday, July 4, 2008

A STORY? | MYSun | MOBILE | SUNLITE | SITEMAP | CONTACT US | RSS

GORDON SMART'S bizarre

# Thrilly Allen has them out again

Published: 18 May 2008

ADD YOUR COMMENTS

LILY ALLEN proves she's shipshape as she goes topless for a shower aboard a yacht.

**LILY ALLEN proves she's shipshape as she goes topless for a shower aboard a yacht.**

The singer, 23, was washing off on the cruiser belonging to Queens Park Rangers owner FLAVIO BRIATORE after taking a dip while in Cannes for the film festival.

And a lucky security guard was on hand to enjoy an aye-aye-ful.

(The Sun, 4 June 2008)

The story above had a picture with it. Indeed, the picture *was* the story. Sometimes text is not the best way to tell a story, but more of that later.

## Audience is key to news

Perhaps the most important thing to grasp about news is that we can't see it in the abstract. We have to look at it in relation to a particular audience. Readers of the *Guardian* would not be interested in Lily Allen topless – or, at least, they probably wouldn't admit to being interested. But the *Sun* and others carried the story prominently.

The *Sunday Times* or the *News of the World* would not be interested in George the cat's adventure, but many of those who read the appeal to find him in the parish newsletter would be interested in the happy ending to the story.

A good question for a journalist to ask themselves is: do our readers, viewers or listeners care about this story?

Get used to asking yourself that. Before long an editor will ask it of you when you are telling them what a fantastic tale you have uncovered. If you say, "Yes, they will," you'll need to be able to justify that claim.

One further thing to remember as we define news: news is only news the first time we hear it. Once we've heard about a story, it's old hat. So:

**News is perishable**

### questions

So what is news? Define news in 50 words, covering the eight key points outlined above. Don't read on until you have written your definition.

Your answer should include the following key points:

News:

- is new to our readers
- is factual
- is about people
- is relevant to our readers, viewers and listeners – it affects them
- is often dramatic and out of the ordinary
- often involves conflict
- can be something that someone doesn't want us to report
- is perishable.

Here's one way of turning those points into a crisp definition:

News is factual information that is new to its audience. It must be relevant to, and affect, that audience. It is about people. It often involves conflict, is dramatic and out of the ordinary. It can be something someone doesn't want reported. It gets stale very quickly.

## PS News is a good story well told

This is not so much an element in our definition, but a pointer to how we approach finding and writing news stories.

Journalists often call their news reports 'stories'. Why do you think they do that?

It is because news reports share many characteristics in common with good fictional stories that appear in novels or make up the plots of films. Good fictional stories involve colourful characters, dramatic events, conflicts, unexpected happenings and – sometimes – tragic or very lucky occurrences. Fictional stories also have a clear beginning, middle and end.

If we are to turn factual events into a good news story we need to use the techniques of fiction to help us do that.

One of the first things reporters realise is that everyday events – real-life stories – are very messy. There is no real clear beginning, middle or end. Whether key characters are acting well or badly can be hard to determine.

So, while we try very hard not to distort events, we have to present them in the form of a coherent story. The best way to do that is to identify the two sides in a situation and give their points of view – their interpretation of the story and how it has unfolded. That way, the reader can decide which version of events they choose to believe.

Here is an example. A football manager is sacked because his team performs badly and gets relegated. He tells reporters that the team's poor performance is the fault of the team's captain, who did not train hard enough and has lost interest in winning games. The team captain says that this is a lie, and that the manager didn't care whether the team was relegated, because he had already agreed to manage another team.

We may not be able to tell whether either of these stories is true. They are both versions of events. When we write our story, we can include both sides of the story. And that takes us on to the other half of the phrase news reporting – the reporting part.

## on the website

- Watch videos in which four editors explain what their publication is, who it's for and what's in it
- Add your comments to get involved in the discussion of what news is and have your say
- Watch videos in which editors reveal their news agenda.

1A2

## What reporting is

Reporting is about finding the answers to questions. To function as news reporters we need to take an event and ask the right questions in order to find out about it. Once we have done that we are ready to file our report. And whether our report is filed in text form or uses audio or video, we still need to answer the same essential questions, so that our audience understands what has happened.

There are six essential questions we must answer for our report to be complete. They are:

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?

By the way, sometimes "How?" can be further defined by saying "How much?" or "How many?" Numbers are very useful in intros and headlines – they are specific, unlike words such as "massive" or "tiny", and enable the reader to assess how important they think the story is.

## questions

Look back, and apply the Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why? and How? test to the very first story we looked at. Don't read on until you have done that.

Here is how five of the six key questions are answered:

A BOY of 16 **[that's the who]** died **[that's the what]** in his brother's arms yesterday **[that's the when]** after confronting a youth who was threatening staff **[that's the why]** in a baker's shop in south London. **[that's the where].**
(The Sunday Times, 11 May 2008)

The only question that hasn't been answered is: **How?** In fact the boy was stabbed to death. So, in the next sentence, our news report would need to answer that question.

The other vital thing we will have to do is say who is telling us all this. That's called **attribution**, and it is essential in any news story. We are *reporting*, so we must say who is giving us this information.

When we write a news story we often find we split our presentation of essential information as follows. First, we say:

- **Who did what/had what done to them?**

Which means we answer two of our six questions.

Then we fill in the answers to our other four questions:

- **When, where, why and how did they do it/have it done to them?**

These six questions are the essential ones we all use, in our everyday lives, in order to find out about things. Our readers will be asking the same set of questions as they begin to read any news report that we write. It's our job to answer their questions as clearly, quickly and interestingly as we can. And we need to answer them in the right order.

## *Here is some information that forms the basis of a news story*

- Who? Hundreds of people
- What? Missing from a Philippine ferry that capsized
- When? On Saturday
- Where? On its way from Manila to the island of Cebu
- Why? There was a typhoon
- How? [The answer to that question is often very closely caught up with the Why?, and in this case there is nothing to add under this heading.]

## questions

Have a go at taking the information learned above, and write a sentence that turns it into a report of the incident.

Don't be self-conscious, and don't worry about formal writing. If you get stuck, just tell yourself the story, then write it down, using the same words as you would use to speak the tale. Do it in about 20 words.

Don't read what's below until you have done that.

Here's our intro:

**Hundreds of people are missing after a Philippines ferry capsized during a typhoon while sailing from Manila to the island of Cebu.**

We could end our first sentence after the word typhoon, and begin a second sentence about the route. We could then say more about the destination. Cebu is a popular holiday destination, and we could mention that.

## questions

Here's another string of bits of information. Have a go at turning them into a story.

- Who? 250,000 council workers
- What? Have voted to take industrial action
- When? This summer
- Where? In England and Wales
- Why? Inflation is affecting their standard of living and they want a 6 per cent pay rise
- How? Banning overtime and working to rule

And don't forget:

- Attribution: the union Unison has announced this action.

Write two or three sentences. Don't read on until you have written your version.

**Council workers have voted in favour of industrial action in a dispute over pay, the union Unison has announced.**

A quarter of a million union members in England and Wales will take part in an overtime ban and work to rule this summer. They are demanding a 6 per cent pay rise.

There you go. Now you are a reporter. I don't mean to suggest that being a really good reporter is easy. I just want to demonstrate that there is no mystery about being a journalist. It takes a lot of practice to get really good at it, but the principles behind what we do are very simple.

It's all about answering key questions, and making sure we say where the information comes from.

What we have just done is called news reporting. We took some news, and we wrote a report about it.

**on the website**

- **Join the discussion on what reporting is: add your comments and have your say**
- **Find out what makes a good journalist**
- **Find out what, if anything, Paris Hilton has to do with being a good journalist.**

1A3

## News: who's the audience?

News doesn't exist in the abstract. It must be directed at – and be relevant to – a particular audience. If it isn't of interest to your chosen audience it's not worth reporting. So let's think about audience in some detail.

Your audience might be international, national, regional, local or hyper-local (which is jargon for very local indeed).

It might be a very general audience – people from all sorts of backgrounds and with all sorts of interests – or it might be very clearly defined.

Your international audience might be a specialist one. It might be made up of investors, or those involved in reinsurance or risk management. It could be pianists. Your national audience could be made up of planning officers or those involved in the retail food business.

You need to know about your audience in order to write news that will be relevant to its members. Remember, if it isn't relevant to them, it isn't news to them.

If the following story appeared in *Golf World*, it wouldn't be news. But it didn't. It was in a magazine for journalists.

**Freelance journalist Sylvia Morris was named journalist of the year last night at the headlinemoney.co.uk awards for personal finance journalists.**

**(Press Gazette, 9 May 2008)**

Can you think of another audience for that story?

What about the people Sylvia Morris writes about, and the industry she covers?

## questions

Come up with three audiences for the following piece of information. If you haven't heard of Christopher Lloyd, Google him.

Photo: Jonathan Buckley.

**The late Christopher Lloyd's house and garden, Great Dixter in East Sussex, has been allocated more than £4 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help safeguard its future.**

**(The Garden, May 2008)**

Make your list before you read on.

Among the audiences for this information are:

- **Keen gardeners** – so the story is of interest to the readers of gardening magazines and websites
- **People who visit gardens** – so the story is of interest to those who provide news and information to them
- **People who live near Great Dixter** – so the story is of interest to local newspapers and websites.

As well as those specialist, clearly defined audiences, there might be a general audience for this story. Great Dixter is often featured in colour supplements, so a magazine editor might decide this is a good peg (a peg is an event to hang a story on) for running a Great Dixter feature now.

So you know what news is. And you know how important it is to know who your audience is.

Very often, news stories published for a general audience can be the source of new, much more detailed and targeted stories for particular audiences. If I give you some general news stories and tell you what your specialist audience is, you will be able to come up with some stories directed at those audiences.

Here are the general news stories:

### New rules for consumer protection

**A new law aimed at protecting consumers against rogue traders has come into force in the UK.**

**For the first time in UK law there will be a duty on all businesses not to trade unfairly.**

**The law aims to tackle everything from aggressive sales tactics by rogue builders to bogus closing-down sales.**

**Fortune-tellers, astrologers and mediums are among those affected by the rules, which require them to say their services are for "entertainment only".**

**(bbc.co.uk, 26 May 2008)**

## questions

Here are some audiences. What stories would you pursue for each of them, from this information?

- **Consumers in general**
- **The boss of a building company**
- **Trading standards officers.**

Don't read on until you have your ideas written down.

The stories you could pursue are:

- **Consumers in general**: you could tell them how they will be protected by this new legislation – and against what dodgy practices – and give them details of what to do if someone tries to con them

- **The boss of a building company**: you could tell him what "aggressive sales tactics" he must not indulge in
- **Trading standards officers**: you could tell them in detail what practices they must look out for and the action they should take if they discover them.

Here is another piece of information:

### 'Care flawed' in many bypass ops

The care given to many patients having heart bypass surgery may be flawed, according to an expert report.

The study suggested that as many as one in five of the 20,000 patients a year undergoing the operation do not get the best possible care.

(bbc.co.uk, 4 June 2008)

Here are your audiences:

- **Hospital managers**
- **Patients facing heart bypass surgery.**

## questions

What stories could you pursue for them?

Don't read on until you have your story ideas.

- **Hospital managers**: how to ensure your surgical and nursing teams give the best possible care
- **Patients facing heart bypass surgery**: what level of care you can expect, how to recognise when you don't get it and what to do about it.

on the website

- Test your understanding of targeting news at an audience with our interactive quiz
- See what the author, media experts and other students have to say about multi-media reporting, and add your comments.

1A4

## News: where does it come from?

So how do you find news? Most stories start from an initial germ of an idea, and need following up. A press release, for example, should be the start of a reporter's quest for a story, not the end.

We take the initial piece of information and we add to it. We find out more, we look for updates, more interesting angles, we talk to those involved, we go along to an event, get pictures, video, audio where appropriate.

### *Let's look at some stories and see where they came from*

Here are three stories from the front page of the BBC News website on one particular day.

*1 Here's a story about a murder*

**Youth 'brutally' killed in park**

A murder inquiry has been launched after the battered body of a teenager was found in a park in West Yorkshire.

Detectives said the youth, aged 17 or 18, was found in Crow Nest Park in Dewsbury at 1930 BST on Sunday.

(http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/west_yorkshire/7419966.stm)

WHERE THE STORY CAME FROM

As the second par makes clear, the police are the source of this story. On the West Yorkshire Police website there is a press release that alerted the media to the story:

**http://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/section-item.asp?sid=12&iid=5010**

Here is the press release from West Yorkshire Police. It contains a number of additions to an initial release, organised in order of publication, with the latest at the bottom.

## Dewsbury suspicious death update

At about 7.30 last night police were contacted by the ambulance service who had been called to Crow Nest Park at Dewsbury, where the body of a 16 yr old youth was found.

The 16 yr old appears to have been subject to a serious assault. We are still investigating the cause of death.

Police are keen to identify the young man, who is Asian and smartly dressed in white tracksuit bottoms, a white "Bench" top and black trainers.

We know there were a number of groups of young people in the park throughout yesterday and we need them to come forward as a matter of urgency. We also want to hear from anyone who has information about what might have happened, or who knows the identity of the young man. Anyone with information is asked to ring the Incident Room on 01924 431000.

0925am update – we now believe we know the identity of the young man, though at this stage we are not in a position to release that. We hope to be able to do so later today.

Det Supt Chris Thompson, speaking at a media briefing at 11am today said:

Last night at 7.30pm a young man aged about 17 was found in a walled garden inside Crow Nest park. The cause of death has not yet been established but he had been subjected to a sustained and vicious beating. A post mortem will be carried out later this morning.

We would like to appeal for anyone who was in the park between 2pm and 8pm yesterday to come forward and help us build a clearer picture of events.

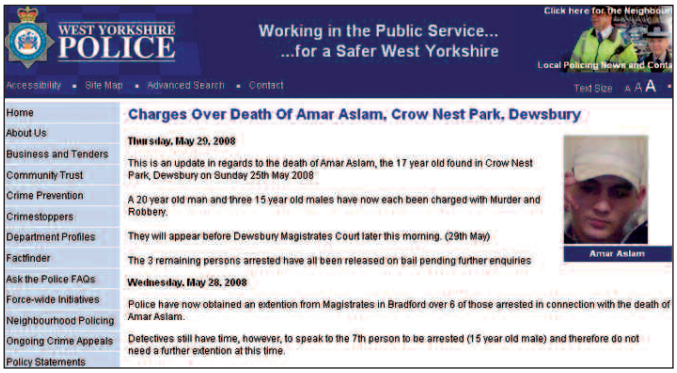
We know the park was very busy yesterday with a lot of groups of young people around during the day.

We have not yet established a motive for the attack.

On the force website is a page where all press releases are issued:

**http://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/section.asp?sid=12**

The West Yorkshire force has a very systematic way of updating its releases, which makes it easy to follow what the latest developments are in any case. The grab of that page has some further updates on it.


WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE
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...for a Safer West Yorkshire
Accessibility • Site Map • Advanced Search • Contact
Text Size A A A
Home
About Us
Business and Tenders
Community Trust
Crime Prevention
Crimestoppers
Department Profiles
Factfinder
Ask the Police FAQs
Force-wide Initiatives
Neighbourhood Policing
Ongoing Crime Appeals
Policy Statements
Charges Over Death Of Amar Aslam, Crow Nest Park, Dewsbury
Thursday, May 29, 2008
This is an update in regards to the death of Amar Aslam, the 17 year old found in Crow Nest Park, Dewsbury on Sunday 25th May 2008
A 20 year old man and three 15 year old males have now each been charged with Murder and Robbery.
They will appear before Dewsbury Magistrates Court later this morning. (29th May)
The 3 remaining persons arrested have all been released on bail pending further enquiries
Amar Aslam
Wednesday, May 28, 2008
Police have now obtained an extention from Magistrates in Bradford over 6 of those arrested in connection with the death of Amar Aslam.
Detectives still have time, however, to speak to the 7th person to be arrested (15 year old male) and therefore do not need a further extention at this time.

If you go to the site, you'll notice there is an RSS feed you can subscribe to. RSS stands for really simple syndication. To subscribe to an RSS feed you click on the RSS logo and add it to your reader. If you have a Google account you can use their reader, although plenty of others are on offer. Once you have subscribed, all the releases that are added to this RSS feed come automatically to your reader and are on your desktop whenever you want to look at them.

If you were covering crime in West Yorkshire, that feed would be an invaluable source of news stories.

*2 Here's a story about space exploration*

**Historic pictures sent from Mars**

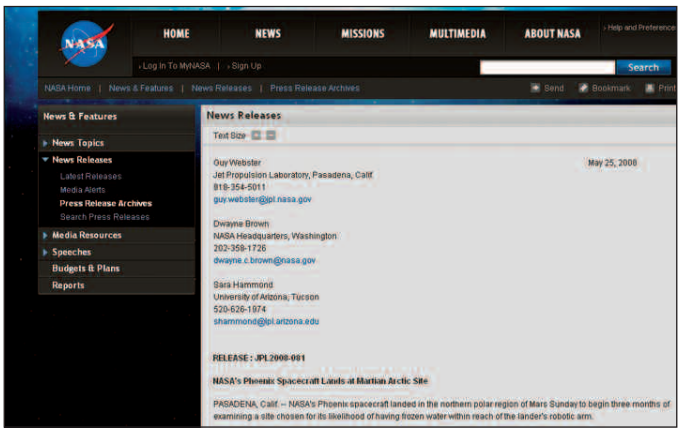
A Nasa spacecraft has sent back the first historic pictures of an unexplored region of Mars.

(bbc.co.uk, 26 May 2008)

WHERE THE STORY CAME FROM

Nasa issued a press release on its website:

**http://www.nasa.gov/news/releases/archives/index.html**




It began like this:

**NASA's Phoenix Spacecraft Lands at Martian Arctic Site**

**05.25.08** – NASA's Phoenix spacecraft landed in the northern polar region of Mars Sunday to begin three months of examining a site chosen for its likelihood of having frozen water within reach of the lander's robotic arm.

*3 Here's a story about an eccentric event*

**Cheese racers in steep challenge**

**Dozens of competitors have been hurling themselves down a steep hill in the annual bank holiday cheese-rolling event in Gloucestershire.**

**(bbc.co.uk, 26 May 2008)**

You'll notice, by the way, if you go to that story online at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/gloucestershire/7419788.stm, that the BBC has chosen to open this report with a video. That's a reflection of the fact that, in telling this story, moving pictures speak louder than words or stills.

WHERE THE STORY CAME FROM

The organisers of the event have publicised it and invited the media along. There is a link from the story to the organisers' website, and that gives details of how to get media accreditation:

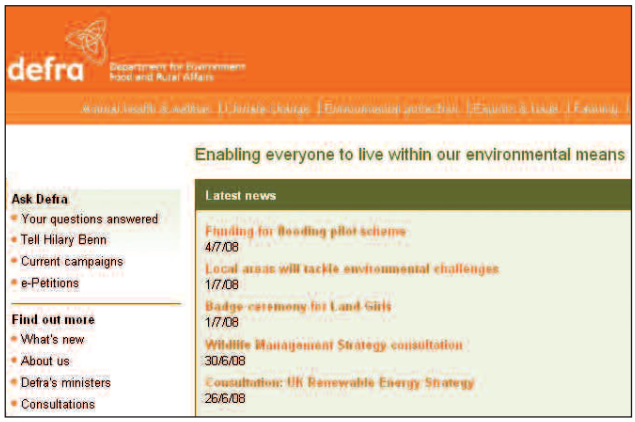
**http://www.cheese-rolling.co.uk/media_press.htm**

## *Common news sources*

Here are some common sources of stories. Which of them are relevant to any given website, newspaper, magazine, radio or TV channel will depend on its audience.

- Court cases
- Local and national government
- The stock market and company reports
- The emergency services – police, fire and rescue, ambulance and coastguard
- Product launches
- Press releases from a wide range of organisations
- News wire services
- Anniversaries
- News from your own publication, your readers and your contacts

- News from other media outlets
- Campaigns, opinion polls, surveys.




Defra, along with all other government departments, issues press releases on its website.

Reuters is one of the main world newswire services.

## *On- and off-diary stories*

News stories fall into two types: ones that can be predicted, that we have notice of; and those that we cannot predict.

Stories we have notice of are called on-diary stories. Stories that cannot be on the diary because they cannot be predicted are – you guessed it – off diary.

## *Some examples*

Here are some examples of stories gained from some of the sources on our list. Our list is not an exhaustive one, by the way. You might like to think about additional sources to add to it.

*Court cases*

A US court is to hear the opening statements in the trial of a UK man accused of killing his family.

(bbc.co.uk, 6 June 2008)

*Local government*

Some of the biggest cruise liners in the world will soon be sailing into Liverpool as work is due to start on a new liner facility at the Pier Head.

The project will see a 350 metre (1,148ft) extension to Princes Dock.

The site is being developed by Liverpool City Council and Peel Holdings, with funding from the North West Development Agency (NWDA).

Council Leader Warren Bradley said work was now "full steam ahead".

*National government*

**Free swimming to be 2012 legacy**

England's swimming pools could be free by the time of the London 2012 Olympics, the government is signalling.

(bbc.co.uk, 6 June 2008)

*The stock market and company reports*

Royal Bank of Scotland is set to discover whether investors have agreed to buy an extra £12bn of the firm's shares.

**Verizon Wireless has said that it is buying Alltel in a deal worth $28.1bn making it the largest mobile phone network in the US, overtaking AT&T.**

*The emergency services – police, fire and rescue, ambulance and coastguard*

**Firefighters have been tackling a huge fire which started overnight at a warehouse in South Yorkshire.**

*Product launches*

These are important for what are known as trade or business to business (B2B) publications. Such publications serve workers in an industry, or the members of a profession or trade. B2B publications seek to inform their readers about the latest products and services coming on to the market. Product launches are also important for what are known as consumer publications. These serve the consumers of a product or service, rather than those involved in its production or provision.

Here is news of a product launch from the French car-maker Citroën:

**The introduction of C4 is more than a product launch. It is a strategic move for Citroën to speed up its operations in China.**

That news would be of interest to a B2B publication dealing with the motor industry. It would not be of interest to car buyers, who would want to know what the car cost, how it performed and whether it was better than its rivals.

*Press releases and press conferences*

These can come from a very wide range of organisations, from the police alerting the public, via us, of a dangerous individual on the loose, to a company launching a new product.

**Today, the Supervisory Board of HUGO BOSS AG has resolved on the appointment of Claus-Dietrich Lahrs as member of the Managing Board and CEO of HUGO BOSS AG. It is intended that the appointment becomes effective already as of August 1, 2008.**

**Morton Plant Hospital has been recognized as a 100 Top hospital in a national study, the 2007 Thomson 100 Top Hospitals: Cardiovascular Benchmarks for Success, formerly the Solucient 100 Top Hospitals study. Morton Plant is one of only two hospitals in the United States to have received Top 100 recognition for heart care for nine consecutive years.**

You will have noticed that the press releases above – one from the Hugo Boss clothing company, the other from an American hospital – are not well written. It will take some work for a journalist to establish what the story is – if any – and to which audience it will count as news. That's where we come in. Journalists are good at spotting information that is of interest to the audiences they serve – even when those providing the information haven't a clue how to present it.

### *News wire services*

There are international, national, regional and local agencies. Some supply general news, some specialise in, for example, financial news or sport. Media outlets will usually subscribe to a feed of news from such services but, depending on the service and how often it is used, might buy items individually.

#### INTERNATIONAL

**Tensions are rising over attempts by Pakistan, the traditional supplier of food to Afghanistan, to curb its wheat exports to make sure it can feed its own population.**
**(Reuters)**

#### NATIONAL

News home > UK
Print
Go-ahead for Archbishop's skydive
6 June 2008 09:31 am
Add comments
The Archbishop of York's charity skydive should go ahead, the Red Devils parachute display team said.
Dr John Sentamu, 58, is jumping from 12,500ft for the Afghanistan Trust, a charity which raises money for soldiers killed or wounded while serving in that country.

Source: virginmedia.com.

The Archbishop of York's charity skydive should go ahead, the Red Devils parachute display team said.

(Press Association)

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Magazines and periodicals
We have a large team of news reporters, feature writers, photographers and video journalists working from our head office in Hampshire, ideally placed to cover the entire south.
Our award-winning photography department also does specialist PR work for many of Britain's top companies.

People could soon be donning revolutionary mittens to keep them cool rather than ward off chilly weather. Scientists are developing gloves and boots which people will be able to put on in hot weather to stop them overheating.

(Solent News and Photo Agency)

### *Anniversaries*

Anniversaries are very popular pegs for stories. Sometimes they can be an excuse for lazy journalism. An audience isn't always interested in something just because it happened 10, 20 or 25 years ago. For example:

The 25th anniversary of the visit by the Space Shuttle Enterprise to Stansted Airport has been marked.

(www.bbc.co.uk, 5 June 2008)

But at other times there is good reason to return to a story one year on:

> **The family of hostage Peter Moore have made an emotional appeal for his release on the anniversary of his abduction.**
>
> **(www.bbc.co.uk, 2 June 2008)**

### *News from your own publication, your readers and your contacts*

Monitoring your own website, newspaper, magazine, TV channel or radio station is vital, not only because you must be familiar with what you are publishing or broadcasting but because your own publication can be a great source of new stories to follow up.

Responses from readers to news items – via comments on stories, blog posts, emails and letters – can include new information that pushes a story forwards and gives something new to write about.

Also, readers may raise subjects that you were unaware of.

Tips from a reporter's contacts are another important source of news. Contacts are people who know you well enough, or trust you enough, to give you stories in preference to other reporters. They may do so because they know that you will treat the story fairly, or that you will keep their name out of it if they have requested anonymity. The great advantage of tips is that they often put you ahead of your rivals.

Leaks from individuals or organisations may also put you ahead of the game. Leaks are unofficial, unattributable announcements, or the surreptitious release of documents. A person or organisation may leak to you because they know you, trust your publication or want to manage the release of a story that they believe you will treat sympathetically.

### *Campaigns, opinion polls, surveys*

News organisations often decide that a particular issue has great resonance for their readers, viewers or listeners, and decide to take a stand on it. They usually have a goal in mind – persuading major retailers to stop issuing plastic bags, for example.

Asking for opinions is very easy to do on the web. Getting readers to vote on a topic is easy for us to organise, and for them to participate in.

At a more organised level, media outlets often commission a survey from a recognised polling organisation. This means that the poll will have been scientifically designed and that results will carry some weight. Below is one from the *Guardian*, which polled UK voters on who they would like to win the US presidential race (14 July 2008).

guardian.co.uk

News | Sport | Comment | Culture | Business | Money | Life & style

News > World news > Barack Obama

US election 2008: Britain's backing Obama: Democrat beats McCain by five votes to one

Julian Glover and Ewen MacAskill in Washington
The Guardian, Monday July 14, 2008
Article history

Obama's support in Britain does not alter across age barriers, as it does in the US. Photograph: Bryan Oller/AP/The Gazette

Barack Obama is overwhelmingly Britain's choice to be the next US president, five times more popular than his Republican rival, John McCain, a Guardian/ICM poll shows today. Carried out ahead of the Democratic candidate's visit to Britain next week, the poll reveals that 53% feel certain he would make the best president, with only 11% favouring McCain; 36% declined to express an opinion.

Copyright: the *Guardian*.

A survey can be less formal. We can do what is called a ring-round – or an email round – in which we ask respondents their views on one or more key questions. Such a survey might be less scientific than a poll, but it enables us to get a range of particular individuals engaging on a topic.

We can also go out and do a vox pop. The name comes from the Latin, *vox populi*, or voice of the people. We can take still pictures of the people who talk to us, or video them and create a package of their responses.

### *News from other media outlets*

Journalists are great recyclers. A great deal of what we do is inspired, to be polite (or nicked, to be honest), from another publication of some kind. TV and radio often feed off newspapers. Newspapers often feed off broadcasters. All the traditional media feed off the web, and web journalists feed off the comments and input of readers, bloggers, Twitterers and those who post their comments on stories, and about issues, that are in the news.

At its best, this process is a positive one. We take the germ of an idea from something that has been published elsewhere, and adapt and update it for our audience and for the particular medium we are working in.

Recycling is increasingly common today, with multimedia journalism, because there are no deadlines and no restriction on how often we can update a story. Or, at least, there are no restrictions imposed by printing deadlines and distribution schedules. We don't have to wait for a video or audio report to be edited. If there is no time for that, we go live to air or web. If we work on a weekly newspaper and there is no print edition for four days, no problem. We publish first to the web. If we work on a monthly magazine, where it is impossible to cover news effectively, again no problem. We establish a news website with daily updates, publish an email bulletin, offer an RSS feed, SMS or Twitter subscription.

**on the website**

- Learn more about sources for stories
- Find links to online versions of the sites referred to in this unit
- See what the author, media experts and other students have to say about finding news, and add your comments.

1A5

## What's the best way to tell a story?

### *Multimedia news: how to tell it*

The other thing we have to decide when we are working on a story is how to tell it. That is, what medium, or range of media, should we use to report it? We have all the traditional storytelling methods at our disposal. If we were working only on TV, we'd have to try to find pictures for every report that we wrote. You'll have seen how, when it is doing a piece about obesity, TV struggles to tell the story pictorially, and shows the backsides of anonymous people walking out of burger bars. During the long wait for an election result, TV has to use endless shots of people hanging about in halls, and elaborate 3-D graphics.

With multimedia journalism we choose the medium that best fits the story we are telling. If there aren't any good pictures to be had, then we don't have to use video or stills. If a story does not lend itself to a pictorial treatment, then we can use text to tell it.

Each medium – text, video, stills and audio – has its strengths and weaknesses:

- Broadly, **text is good for explanation and analysis**. If you need to give readers a lot of detail, that can best be done through the medium of text
- We can **use moving images to show events as they unfold, and to capture the immediacy of dramatic situations**

- We can **use still pictures to capture events after they have happened**, and allow the viewer to savour them
- We can **use graphics to simplify the presentation of statistics and complex figures**.

And that's by no means all that we can do with multimedia journalism.

- We can **use interaction to create a dialogue with the reader**, to make them a part of our storytelling and to develop our stories through them.

With the web and multimedia, we are free to use none, some or all of the full range of storytelling techniques – in addition to the key one of text – to tell a story to best advantage.

## questions

Let's think about the three stories in the last unit. They were the Dewsbury murder, the Mars landing and the cheese-rolling event. Take another look at them. What is the best medium to tell them in?

Jot down your thoughts before you read on.

### *1 The Dewsbury murder story*

Little is known at present other than what the police have released. A straightforward text story is a good basis. You could also go to the scene and conduct video interviews. Residents might well want to discuss the situation and make their feelings clear. They may have things to say about the level of violence they experience in their community. They might also want to express their views via comments on the story you publish. So interaction on the web would be an effective way of adding to your coverage.

### *2 The Mars landing story*

Text can be used to tell the story in detail, to give a clear summary of what has happened and some background to it. But text can't do full justice to it, so there must be some other elements.

The BBC website coverage also included an embedded video of the first pictures sent back from the craft.

There was also an embedded video to capture the drama of the moments just before and after the landing, and to record the delight of the Nasa team at mission control.

There was a still-picture slide show to combine the photos that the craft sent back to earth and the Nasa crew's celebrations.

*3 Cheese rolling*

This is an annual diary event so you have plenty of time to plan your coverage. On the day, you really have to go to this event to cover it properly, and it is best told in pictures. A video combining footage of cheeses being hurled downhill, interviews with those who do it and the spectators would work well.

You could do something in advance, too. The website talks about the cheeses, made by the only Double Gloucester manufacturer using traditional methods. An interview with her might be fun. Doesn't she mind her skilfully made cheeses being hurled down hills? You could even use this as an angle for a piece about the Double Gloucester dying out.

## *The three stories we have just been looking at all have strong visual possibilities*

But that's not true of every story. Take this one for example:

> EALING'S council tax will rise by 1.9 per cent this year, less than the rate of inflation.
> (Ealing Times, January 2007)

Council tax stories require a good deal of detail and explanation. Readers want to know how much the increase will affect them. There will be complex explanation of how the council arrived at the figure it has set. There will be information on how much it is going to spend on a range of key services.

If you are going to explain such a story in detail, then text is your best option. That's not to say you can't augment your text-based coverage with pictures, video, audio and text interviews with council tax payers.

## *Multimedia storytelling – what works best for each type of story*

Here, in more detail, is a run-through of the main media and an outline of the benefits of each.

### *Text*

Text gives depth. It is good for context, background and analysis. It connects with our audience's intellect – with their desire to comprehend.

When you really want to understand something, text is best. Text is also good for providing links to other material related to a story – both current and archive material. It's great for displaying searchable databases of information. So, for example, the reader can go to a database of university courses and find the one they are interested in, and how it is rated.

Text is also good for interaction. If we want readers to vote, or comment, or join a debate, then text is quick and simple.

Text is good as an anchor for a story that contains other elements. You can give the facts, outline the nature of the story and offer stills, video or audio as additional elements.

Text is fast and cheap to produce. You can knock out a fair number of news stories in the time it takes you to film and edit one video package.

But text is not always good when we want to draw a reader into a story – to empathise with the victims of a natural disaster or a terrible crime, for example.

### *Video*

Video is great when we want to enable our audience to see and hear an event, or people, or a mix of the two, directly. Video puts the audience at the scene.

Video is good when we have action and drama to capture and convey. It connects with the audience's emotions. In text we can *tell* them about a famine, for example. With video, we can *show* them the suffering of individuals.

If the story warrants it, we can go live to an event and broadcast video from it straight to our website. Apart from the fact that we have to be at the scene, this is quick and easy reporting.

When video becomes very time-heavy is if we have to create a well-crafted video package, involving a range of interviews. For such a package, we have to go to places, arrange interviews, edit footage into a coherent package and publish it. For this reason, many web publishers are reluctant to use video.

CCTV footage can be a good source of a video story. The *Southampton Daily Echo*, for example, built a video around some CCTV footage of someone stealing a urinal from a pub's gents:

**http://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/video/index.var.1941.b.6.php**

*Stills photography*

Good stills photography captures a moment. It is incredibly valuable in sport, when things happen fast and even an action replay can't capture the real drama of a shot at goal, a momentary lapse or a split-second decision.

Of course, not all stills photography is that vital. Often a still is used to show what a person looks like – a classic head and shoulders mug shot.

It can also be used to bring home something that words can't convey with full effectiveness. If a much-loved park has been vandalised, if racist graffiti has been sprayed on graves, or if a horrible crash has occurred, stills are very useful in effectively conveying what has happened.

With a still (and this is why they are called that) we get a split second frozen in time. Great stills can be incredibly memorable. You can probably picture some stills that have been imprinted on your brain.

Stills are also very popular with readers. They buy them, so giving us a source of revenue. Traditionally edited local papers often have a policy of publishing as many people's pictures as they can, partly because it sells papers, but also because those people might buy a print of the picture that is published.

Stills can tell a story in themselves, and hence stand alone from text. They are much cheaper and quicker to produce than video.

*Audio*

Audio has the immediacy of video without the disadvantage that the audience member has to give it their full attention. Audio gives a quick impression of a speaker – their accent, age, personality.

An audio interview can be woven with narration to give context and comment on what is being said. It is very portable – audio podcasts are very convenient ways of obtaining news or information when the audience is on the move and doing other things.

## *We must choose the right medium for the story we are covering*

Before the advent of multimedia, if a journalist came from a print background they would tend to favour text; if they came from a TV background they would tend to favour video; and if they came from radio, then audio was their chosen way of telling stories.

In multimedia journalism, we have no favourites – we choose the right medium for the story we are working on. We use the best format every time.

## *Combining storytelling techniques*

With multimedia reporting we don't just have to pick one way of telling a story. We can combine two or more elements in order to present each aspect of a story most effectively.

We can use text as our main means of storytelling, and add in a video or sound clip to give better coverage to one element in a story. We can twin a text report with a stills slide show.

We can use video as our main medium but give a URL that will take viewers to, for example, a report that the video is based on.

We can combine audio and stills to make an audio slide show.

This combination of sound and still images is very effective. It can combine powerful, evocative stills images with, for example, the comments of the subject of those images on what is taking place.

Stills of a footballer receiving a career-ending tackle can be combined with his commentary on what happened, how it felt and what he thought at the time and how he looks back on the incident. Video of the tackle would be over in a second and would not have the impact of good stills.

This combination expands on the traditional picture story, and adds to the traditional radio package. It is a true child of multimedia journalism and the web.

## *Tailoring one story for print, web, video and audio*

Often, we will have to create versions of a story we are working on in a range of media – a text report, a video and an audio version. For speed we don't want to make our audio and video versions too different. Indeed, if the audio track of our video will stand alone that's great.

We can take any given story and decide how best to tell it in each of the media at our disposal.

We can create a video package, an audio package, a text report that links to them both and has an opportunity for the reader to get involved – by voting, commenting, chatting, linking or any number of other interactions.

## *Where are they reading you?*

The other vital aspect of multimedia journalism is our knowledge of where our audience is consuming our news, and which medium of storytelling best fits those situations.

For example, if we are giving traffic information to the residents of a particular town – or drivers on a certain stretch of motorway – then they need us most when they are out and

about. Radio is probably the best outlet for that. But if our publisher doesn't have a radio station, maybe we can give commuters on public transport a mobile phone SMS message service or a website that is optimised for mobile phones.

If they are train, coach or bus commuters they might also like print, but they could be keen to download audio or video packages, known as podcasts or vodcasts, of our main news and features so they can listen and watch on their commute.

On a Sunday, our audience's members may be sitting in an armchair, or relaxing in the garden, and could be most happy with a print publication.

**on the website**

- **Take our interactive quiz to see how well you have grasped the principles of multimedia storytelling**
- **Add your comments about multimedia**
- **Look out for newswriting masterclasses.**

1A6

## News: how to write it

We are concentrating on text in this chapter, but in the multimedia world text is not just static words on a page. Text also covers links to other information, opportunities for readers to take part in polls and to type in their comments on our stories.

Text is the bedrock of multimedia journalism – the glue that binds the video, audio and stills together.

We are concentrating on text for electronic publication. That's very similar to text for print, but with a few refinements that make our words as effective as possible online and in multimedia packages.

We are teaching you to write for the web because that is where news first appears. We don't usually have time to write it twice, so it makes sense to write in a way that optimises our stories for the web, but which works for print too.

## How to begin a story

Two key questions that help us focus on how we begin an online news story are: what's the intro? Or: what's the headline?

If we get the beginning right, we have cracked the hardest thing about writing news. We have started in the right place, and can move on from there, following the correct course.

Get it wrong and we'll have no clear idea of how to structure our information from then on.

If you think back to unit 1A2 in this chapter, what we wrote there were a couple of intros – one about a ferry disaster, the other about a council workers' strike. If we want to write more, we have begun at the right place, by answering the key question: what is new, or what has happened?

If you are writing breaking news, you might well only know a very little. But you can publish that straightaway – maybe in the form of a news ticker line, an SMS message or a Twitter post. (Don't worry – we'll deal with all those in depth in Chapter Seven.) You could publish a headline, and an intro, on the website.

As you learn more you can build the story from there.

Once, stories would have had to be written in full before they could be published. That's no longer the case. Now we can publish what we know, then build on it with new versions of the story as we learn more. But what stays true – now as in the past – are the ways news is structured.

So let's learn how to structure a news story right away.

## Headlines and intros, or heads and sells, or heads and blurbs

Various terms are used to describe the headlines and first paragraphs of text reports. Whatever they are called, here's what they need to be.

If we think back to our definitions of news, a key one was that something should be new – or at least new to our audience. This is key to our intro-writing. We want information that is new, that says what is the latest, that tells the reader what has just happened, is happening or will happen.

We don't have much room to express this. Often, heads are restricted to five, six or seven words, and sells/intros to about 20 words. Some content management systems – the set-ups that we have to feed our content into in order to publish it online – are very unforgiving. If we go a character over on the head, or a word over on the sell, it just cuts us off. So we get heads that end in mid-air and sells that are missing a vital final element.

Let's look at some heads and sells and how they work. By the way, you'll see the present tense used. In news reporting for print, it is more common to adopt the past tense.

### Alcohol squad to target 10 towns

A specialist squad is to help advise English towns with the most drink-related hospital admissions.

(bbc.co.uk, 9 June 2008)

### Deadline for school 'rescue plan'

The government warns the poorest-performing secondary schools to improve or face "formal intervention".

(bbc.co.uk, 9 June 2008)

### West End is 'celebrity obsessed'

Theatre director Sir Jonathan Miller accuses West End producers of having "an obsession with celebrity".

(bbc.co.uk, 9 June 2008)

How do we decide what to say in a head/headline, and what to say in a sell/intro? Think first about what's new. Then see if you can include some of the how or why it happened.

If we think of an intro as the summary of a story, then the headline is a summary of the intro. But we don't want to make them too similar, or it will feel like we are repeating ourselves. So we use the technique of giving more detail in our intro/sell than we can in our head.

So, in the first example, "alcohol squad" becomes "specialist squad" and "10 towns" becomes "English towns", then the intro goes on to explain why the 10 have been targeted.

Take a look at the second two examples and analyse how the head and intro work together. Look also at how many of our Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why? and How? are being answered in them.

## *Let's come up with some heads and sells of our own*

### questions

Here are four stories. Come up with a head of between five and seven words and a sell of between 18 and 22 words for each of them.

If you get stuck, ask yourself this: if there was only one thing I could say, what would it be? That one thing is likely to be the most important, and will form the basis for what you write. Think of the intro and sell as the conclusion of the story or – if events are still unfolding – the very latest thing that has happened.

1 Coordinated attacks on trains have brought chaos to the city of Bombay, which is India's financial centre, and rescuers fear that the number of casualties will increase. Heavy monsoon rains are hampering the rescue effort.

Indian television news channels showed images of the wounded lying on train tracks and being carried on sheets through stations.

"People began jumping off our running train when a bomb went off and filled the carriage with smoke and fire," said a commuter with serious injuries to his left arm and shoulder.

More than 100 people have been killed and around 300 others injured after seven explosions tore through commuter trains during the evening rush hour in Bombay.

2 For the 13 weeks to July 1 like-for-like sales at Marks and Spencer rose 8.2pc compared to the same period last year. Like-for-like sales of general merchandise jumped 10.5pc while food gained 5.8pc. Chief executive Stuart Rose said the company was gaining market share across all areas of its business, save children's wear.

The company is creating 4,000 new shopfloor jobs in its stores as a result of this sharp increase in quarterly sales.

Mr Rose said the company operated a "lean machine" but needed the extra staff to cope with the unexpected surge in volumes at its stores.

3 James Fairbright, 23, an accounts administrator earning £16,000 a year, exploited his position at a building firm to transfer money to his bank account then into his Ladbrokes internet account.

The online gambling addict stole more than £1 million from his employers to pay for betting sprees, forcing the company to go into liquidation and lay off staff, a court heard yesterday.

He spent up to £7,000 a day, placing bets on sports of every kind, including horse racing and football matches, and on internet poker and other online casino games.

4 The body of 21-year-old horsewoman Hazel Finnegan was yesterday found by a passing motorist who saw her horse staggering in the road until it collapsed and died. Police believe the animal may have been taken ill and thrown Miss Finnegan, an experienced rider, before dying from a possible heart attack.

Police, who were investigating the death in which the horsewoman was found on a country road with her mount lying dead beside her, are looking at the possibility that it might have fallen and crushed her, before getting to its feet again.

Don't read on until you have written your heads and sells.

Here are our suggestions:

1 **100 dead in Bombay terror attacks**

Over 100 commuters were killed and 300 injured when terrorists detonated bombs on evening rush-hour trains in India's financial capital.

2 **4,000 new jobs at M&S**

An 8 per cent increase in sales figures at Marks and Spencer has led to the creation of 4,000 shopfloor jobs.

3 **Online gambling addict steals £1m from firm**

A £16,000-a-year accounts administrator forced his employers into liquidation by stealing to fund his £7,000-a-day gambling addiction.

4 **Rider killed by dying horse**

An experienced young rider may have died after her horse suffered a heart attack and fell on her, police believe.

## *Where to go from there: how to structure the rest of a news story*

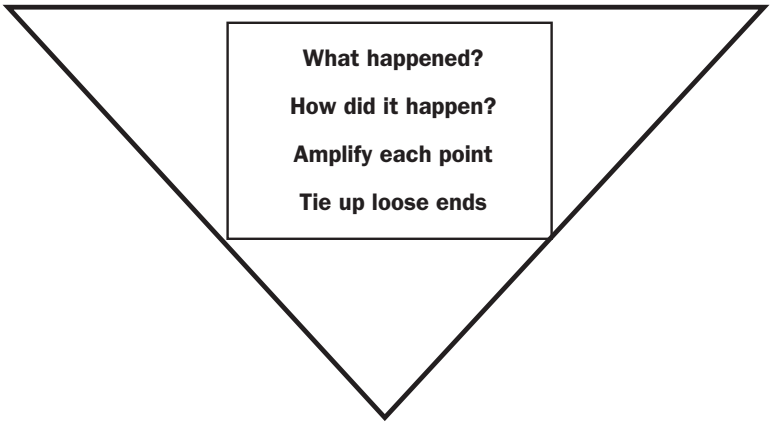
Getting the intro right is the most important thing to do when writing a news story. After that comes writing a good second par. Between them, those first two paragraphs set things up well. If you get them right, you will find that writing the rest of the news story is relatively easy.

There is a simple structure that governs the writing of a news story. It's like a multi-purpose ground-plan on which we can construct any news report.

Perhaps you haven't realised this yet, but you already know what the first two instructions are on the ground-plan.

Below is a graphic that shows you what I mean. The structure we use for writing a news story – the ground-plan – is called:

*The inverted triangle*




The top of the triangle is the start of the story. The inverted triangle is at its widest up there at the start because you need the most important things at the top. You are starting your story at the widest point, at the point of greatest interest for the reader.

From there, the triangle gets narrower, to denote that the information in the triangle – in the story – is placed in descending order of importance, finally tailing off to bits and pieces which are less important than everything else that has gone before them.

You'll notice that **What happened?** comes right at the top, just as it did when we were writing intros.

Next comes **How or why did it happen?** – just as it did when we were writing second pars.

If we get our first two or three pars right, we will have touched upon everything that is of importance in the story – even if we have only done so very briefly.

When we go on to write more of the story, our task is to take each of those important points that have been briefly introduced and to **explain** them. We go back over each of the points we have made and tell the reader more about it.

Finally comes the instruction to **tie up loose ends**. This means we can finish the story off with less important material.

There are two virtues in writing a story that follows the inverted triangle structure. One is that the reader can stop reading when they have satisfied their interest in the story, without worrying that something important may be buried further down in the story and that they might miss it unless they read to the end.

The second is most relevant when we are writing for print. If we are writing for print there will be a finite number of words assigned for each story. The decision on story length comes

only when the page is laid out, not when you are asked to write your story. When it comes to cutting the story to fit a slot given to it on a page, the sub-editor (who takes a reporter's copy, corrects it, cuts it and puts it on the page) can cut it pretty much from the bottom so that it fits. They can do this quickly. If they had to cut bits throughout the story that would take longer.

The acronym **WHAT** might help you remember this structure:

- **W**hat happened? (Or what's new?)
- **H**ow or why did it happen?
- **A**mplify each of the points made in the above text
- **T**ie up loose ends.

There is another way of helping you ensure you have written your news story correctly. Remember our checklist of six questions that must be answered in every news story. We can begin to answer all of them high up in a news story – certainly within the first three or at most four pars. They are:

- Who? What? When?
- Where? Why? How? (and/or How much? How many?)

It is not always possible to answer all of these questions in a news report. Sometimes information is not available. For example, if people are killed the police may not release their identities immediately.

The golden rule we must follow when we can't give the answer to an obvious question is to say so. Then the reader is not left wondering why certain information is not contained in the story. So, in the case of deaths you often see a sentence such as: "A police spokesman said the names of the dead would not be released until their families had been informed."

Below is an example of how a complete news story is structured. The head and the first two pars are these:

### Manchester congestion charge plan backed

**The government has approved a peak-time congestion-charging scheme for Manchester, and unveiled a £2.8bn plan to create a "world-class public transport system".**

**Motorists would be charged up to £5 to drive in and out of the city in an effort to reduce the region's traffic congestion. If approved by local councillors, the scheme would be introduced in 2013.**

The head and the intro say what is new. The second par says how or why this has happened.

Let's also apply the Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why?, How? test to the first two paragraphs of this story:

- Who? The government
- What? A congestion-charging scheme
- When? In 2013
- Where? In Greater Manchester
- Why? To reduce traffic congestion
- How? By charging £5.

We have begun to answer all of our six questions.

If a story is well written, the first two paragraphs are a self-contained mini-story that can be run without any further words if space is tight. Those two paragraphs introduce the important elements in the story: each key point.

After that, a news story is written by going back over the points – the answers – that have been given and amplifying them. That is why the third main section of a news story is covered in the diagram with **Amplify each point**.

Here is how the congestion-charging story goes on to amplify each point:

> **[I have explained in the bracketed comments where each point in the first two pars is amplified. I have also used two other characteristics of a web-based text story: side headings and bulleted lists.]**

[The scheme, and some attribution:]
Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly told the House of Commons that the government had provisionally made available £1.5bn to support the scheme. The rest of the £2.8bn will come from the city authorities themselves. [Amplifying details of the plan.]

A public consultation will now be held on the plans. They must gain the support of two-thirds of councillors in Greater Manchester in order to proceed further. [Amplifying need for approval.]

If the scheme goes ahead, Manchester will become the first major British city outside London to introduce large-scale congestion charging.

**[Here comes a side heading, followed by a bulleted list.]**

## The charges in detail

Regular drivers would pay a deposit for an electronic tag which would trigger these charges:

- £2 would be charged for heading into the city centre in the morning and crossing the outer ring, roughly following the M60 motorway
- £1 would be the price for crossing the inner ring that roughly follows the inner relief road around Manchester city centre
- £1 would be the cost of crossing each ring heading out of the city in the evening
- Charges would be levied for journeys into the city between 7am and 9.30am and out between 4pm and 6.30pm
- There would be no charge between 9.30am and 4pm. [Amplifying charges to motorists.]

**[We need to use some quotes now to attribute what we have asserted to someone – in this case Ruth Kelly.]**

Ms Kelly said: "Today, as a country, we are faced with an unprecedented growth in people's desire to travel.

"It's essential that we provide people with greater choice over how and when they travel, cut congestion on our roads and take the right decisions for our quality of life, the environment and the long-term health of our economy."

The leader of Manchester City Council, Richard Leese, said only 20 per cent of motorists in Greater Manchester would have to pay the charge.

The scheme would be of great benefit to more than 30 per cent of households who relied entirely on public transport and currently struggled to get to work, he said.

**[But there is opposition, and we need to include it.]**

### Motorists 'will pay £1,200 a year'

Opponents of the scheme have said it could cost motorists up to £1,200 a year at a time when fuel prices and road taxes are rising.

A spokesman for Manchester Against Road Tolls said: "Everybody would like to see improvements to public transport but people do not want a road tolls scheme with the less well-off drivers forced off the road."

Shadow transport secretary Theresa Villiers accused Ms Kelly of "bullying" the people of Manchester into accepting the scheme and called for a referendum.

"What guarantees have people got in Manchester that there won't be excessive increases in the charge in the future?

"Has extending the congestion charge to a third outer ring been ruled out?"

Ms Villiers said three out of 10 local councils in Greater Manchester opposed the plans, and insisted there should be a conurbation-wide referendum.

"The truth is the government is telling Manchester: 'If you say "yes" to congestion charging you get money to improve transport. If you say "No", you do not.'

"That is bullying, pure and simple."

## *Making text scannable*

Why do we use side headings and bulleted lists, and write in such short sentences and paragraphs?

We write like this for one very good reason. Online, people don't read very much. They certainly don't take in every word and wade through long blocks of text. Instead, they scan. They look at a headline, and a sell, and decide based on the information contained in them whether this story is worth reading.

They won't even read a full sentence if it doesn't look interesting. Instead, they judge the relevance or otherwise of a piece of text to their interests or concerns on the strength of the first few words. We must make our text work for scanners – it must be scannable.

So, the first few words in our head or sell have to hook the reader.

If we have hooked them, we have done well, but we can't relax. They treat each new par in the same way – looking at the first few words to decide whether it is worth reading. That means we must keep our pars short – because if the reader doesn't like the look of the first piece of information presented they won't move on to the second.

Therefore, we try to keep to just **one piece of info per paragraph**.

We also break up our text with **side headings**. These are clear, descriptive phrases that tell the scanner what the next few paragraphs in an article will give them.

If, within a piece of text, we have to convey dense, complex pieces of information we try to cut them up into **bullet points**. Turning a big chunk of text containing several different elements into a bulleted list makes dense information easy to absorb.

There are a couple of very important characteristics of writing for the web that we haven't yet covered. They are **hypertext links** and **thinking in screens**:

### *Hypertext links*

These are links that, when clicked upon, take us to another web page. That page might contain another current story on our website or an archived story of ours or might be a page on someone else's site – either current or archived. There will be much more on this in Chapter Two, where we will create websites, and in Chapter Six, where we will look in more depth at writing news and other types of online story.

### *Thinking in screens*

Each web screen is like a page in a book. We don't want to cram too much on to it. If we do, the reader will have to do a good deal of scrolling to see everything we have put there. Instead, if we have a long and complex story with various aspects to it, we can split the material over several screens. Doing that effectively is often called **thinking in screens**.

Again, there will be more on this in Chapter Two, where we will create websites, and in Chapter Six.

## *A couple of other things to mention before we move on*

### *Quoting*

Quotes are very important in a story. They are evidence that you have obtained the material you are reporting from reliable sources that are prepared to be named in a story. They also give a clear account of a person's views.

You don't have to quote everybody in a news story. Quotes are there for when someone has said something important, and when their words give a strong sense of their views.

Otherwise, it is quicker to use what is called reported speech, that is, when we summarise what someone has said. When we do that we do not use quote marks, but put their comments into our own words.

When quoting, you should say who is speaking before the quote, not after it. Otherwise, the reader does not know who is speaking until the end. For example: "The world will end," says the nutter at the bus station, is less of a story than "The world will end," says Barack Obama. Say who said it first, and the reader immediately knows the value of the statement.

### *Style guides*

The English language gives us a great deal of choice in the way we write. Simple things such as how we present dates, for example: is it 1 July, 1st July, July 1 or July 1st? It could be any of them. When we have choice such as this, we need what is called a style guide to tell us what the preference of our publication is.

A style guide will tell us whether we spell a word "specialise" or "specialize". It will tell us whether we use initial capitals for "Prime Minister" and other titles.

If you don't have a style guide to follow, you need to get one. One simple solution is to use the *Guardian* style guide, which is online, and free. Go to **www.guardian.co.uk** and follow the drop-down menu at top right. You will find "Style Guide" listed towards the bottom of the list. Or, if you prefer, here's a direct link:

**http://www.guardian.co.uk/styleguide/0,,,00.html?gusrc=gpd**

This is a very valuable guide, because it is highly readable and gives a good deal of information about words which, in the *Guardian*'s view, should not be used, styles of writing it approves and disapproves of, and explanations of a wide range of points of grammar and English usage.

**on the website**

- See how the Manchester road-charging story would look online
- Watch video advice on writing heads
- Find out more about the theory and practice of writing for the web at Jacob Nielsen's site
- Submit your questions to industry experts for our regular masterclasses.

1A7

## How to write and structure a blog

Blogging is an informal way of writing that is developing a style all of its own. Indeed, as it is such a relatively new form of writing there are few rules about how to do it. Bloggers follow a wide range of styles, and take very different views on what constitutes good content for a blog and how that content should be presented.

Let's look at one area – politics – and see some of the different approaches bloggers take.

Some bloggers produce finely crafted pieces of writing that have everything in common with the opinion pieces you find in newspapers and magazines, for example Nick Robinson:

**http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/nickrobinson/**

Some blogs concentrate on simply linking to news items that are relevant to a particular issue, without any comment or interpretation from the author. For example, on the US presidential election, see:

**http://www.electapres.com/MT/**

The ElectaPres blog, for example, posts introductions and links to what it sees as the most important election news stories in mainstream media. For example:

**Presidential hopefuls are mum on Medicare and Social Security woes**

**The LA Times**

**A new government report predicts when each will go into the red, but the candidates appear reluctant to touch the subject matter.**

Other bloggers post short items that are like quick-fire comments or news bulletins, using just a hundred or so words and not trying to craft their writing to any great extent. They are using the blog as a way of creating instant comment and news updates as stories happen, and updating it several – sometimes many – times a day.

Iain Dale is a good example:

**http://www.iaindale.blogspot.com/**

Here is a typical post:

**John Simpson's Strange View of Mugabe**

Iain Dale 4:27 PM

**What on earth is John Simpson on? Danny Finkelstein diagnoses a case of foot-in-mouth disease HERE. The BBC's World Affairs Editor seems to have taken leave of his senses in his analysis of what is going on in Zimbabwe.**

Some blogs are contributed to by more than one writer. These collective blogs sometimes suffer from not having one clear voice, but can benefit from containing a range of opinions. It means the debate is right there at the top level, and not confined to readers' comments.

When you start blogging you may well find it a very liberating way of writing compared to traditional news writing. If you are writing text for a print publication, and on a traditional website, you have to include a good deal of material that you must gather from a range of sources.

With a blog, you don't have to reproduce nearly as much of your source material. You have the choice of merely summarising key points and then adding a link for people to read more if they want to. You couldn't do that with print. Readers would have to scurry around, flicking through newspapers and magazines for the material you are referring to. On the web, it's very easy to refer readers to all sorts of other views, background information and further material that might help them delve further into the subject you are covering.

The best blogs have a clearly defined subject area and have plenty of the personality of the blogger in them. Blogs can be a useful addition to your reporting and your coverage of a topic that interests you and you know a lot about. In a news story you can't give your opinions; in a blog you can.

Blogs are easy for readers to respond to. So, if you publish an interesting or controversial post, they can tell you so, and a debate can get underway in the comments section.

Some journalists argue that they simply don't have time to blog because they are too busy writing stories. Those who embrace blogging don't accept this argument. They see it as tied up with the old-fashioned idea that a story has to be complete before you can publish it. With blogging, your story need not be complete at all. It might be just a whisper. It might be an idea you have for a story, the notes you make about an interview, your first reaction after talking to someone, the rough, unedited audio or video of that interview or any other partial report.

Some editors are brave enough to blog about the stories they hope to have on their website, newspaper or TV show. The editors of *Newsnight*, the BBC2 late-night current affairs programme, blog their plans for that night's show.

Here's an extract from their blog:

**Hello everyone.**

**We have the second of our brilliant Burma films tonight. Investigative journalist Simon Ostrovsky reports on the aftermath of cyclone Nargis – we see the harrowing journey he makes into the disaster zone, and how people there are coping with the aid that's trickling through. Shall we have a discussion?**

**What on earth are Europe's leaders going to do about the Irish NO on Lisbon? David Grossman and Neil Breakwell are in Brussels.**

**Do we need to open the debate on GM because of the global food crisis? That's what the Environment Minister, Phil Woolas, seems to be saying. Susan Watts is on the case.**

**Are there any lighter stories you think we should get on air? Please look around.**

**on the website**

- Watch videos about the power of blogging – including one from the US veteran news anchor Dan Rather
- Find a wealth of links to blogs of all kinds
- Submit your questions for a blogging masterclass.

1A8

## Basic reporting assignments

Here are some general assignments that will give you a good introduction to general reporting. In each case there are some examples and guidance on how to get stories. In the Exercises section at the end of this chapter you will be invited to go out on your own – or with fellow students – and cover these and other stories and events. You will also find the links given here listed on the website.

### *Emergency service press calls*

Let's take West Yorkshire Police as an example. Their press releases appear here:

**http://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/section.asp?sid=12**

If you go to this site you'll see an RSS feed. If you were to add that to your reader, you would get releases as soon as they are published.

If you remember, in unit 1A4 we looked at a murder story that had been covered in a press release on this site. Often the releases are not about major matters. They are a mix of major and minor crime reports, public service announcements and announcements of appointments, retirements, bravery awards and the other events in the everyday life of a police force.

Here is one of the releases:

**Appeal: Incident of Damage, Lower Wellhouse, Golcar, Huddersfield**

Tuesday 24 June 2008

Police are appealing for information to reports of an incident which occurred between 4:30pm on Friday 19 June and 9:00am on Saturday the 20 June outside Wellhouse Junior and Infants School, Lower Wellhouse at Golcar in Huddersfield.

Graffiti was daubed on a recently painted post-box and the frames of hanging baskets were also damaged.

PCSO Diane Shaw of the Valleys NPT said:

"The children of the school had actually put hanging baskets together to go in the frames and had made posters which were placed on the perimeter fence urging people to keep the area clean and tidy. A lot of effort has gone into improving the environment around the school and this kind of mindless behaviour will not be tolerated.

"I would urge anyone with any information to contact the Valleys Neighbourhood Policing Team on 01484 436896 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111."

## questions

How would you follow up this release to get a story from it? What media would you use for your report?

Don't read on until you have your plan of action. You can do your research online.

This is a strong story for a local website or newspaper. You would want to go to the school, see the damage, talk to teachers, parents and – possibly – the children. To do that you'd need the permission of the local education authority, although a first call to the head would set you straight on how arrangements need to be made. Talking to children requires the permission of their parents. Such matters are covered in the Press Complaints Commission's Code of Practice, which most publishers subscribe to. It can be found here:

**http://www.pcc.org.uk/cop/practice.html**

You could tailor your report to use any media, but it would certainly benefit from illustration. So, text plus stills is the quickest and simplest way to cover the story. A video

would also be effective – it's a story you want to show the reader for maximum impact. You could also use audio, but the lack of the visual element severely restricts the impact of the story. You or someone you interview would need to describe the damage caused.

Here is another story from the site, and from the same day:

### Illegal Sales Targeted By NPT

Tuesday June 24, 2008

Illegal sales of knives were targeted in an operation by Wakefield Central Neighbourhood Policing Team.

Police staged a test purchase operation aimed at the sale of knives to underage children – it is an offence for shops to sell knives to those under 18.

NPT officers used two youngsters, aged 15 and 13, to carry out test purchases in eleven shops and supermarkets in the city. Only one of the retailers sold to the children. The shop involved will be subject of a police action plan to ensure they have suitable training for staff. The individual that sold the knife received a police caution.

Inspector Dave Peach, of Wakefield Central NPT, said: "I was extremely pleased to see that the retail outlets of Wakefield are aware and actively enforcing this legislation – our shops are operating in a professional manner.

"Wakefield is a safe city with low incidents [the mean incidence] of knife and violent crime but we need to be sure that the supply of knives is not available. I would also ask parents to ensure that their children are not carrying such weapons as they will be prosecuted if caught carrying such weapons."

## questions

If you worked on a Wakefield news website or newspaper, how would you follow this release up?

Is there a story there? After all, only one out of 11 shops sold a knife to an underage teenager. If there is a story, what sources would you go to to develop it?

Don't read on until you have thought about this.

In fact, just one shop breaking the law could be your angle. To a reasonable extent it's a good news story that only one retailer in the town would sell a knife to a 13- and a 15-year-old.

Finding the names of the shops involved would be good. The police might tell you officially, but they might not. You might need to use your police contacts for an off-the-record steer on this.

Having shopkeepers who are good contacts would be a great help. Mid Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce (**http://www.mycci.co.uk/**), which represents business, might help.

## *Press releases*

Here's an extract from a release from the Government's News Distribution Service (the original goes on a bit):

**Southampton parents given life-saving advice during Child Safety Week**

**Children and parents in Southampton will have the chance to find out more about how to prevent accidents in the home during Child Safety Week (23rd – 29th June) run by the charity Child Accident Prevention Trust.**

**The theme of this year's event "Make A Change. Make A Difference" aims to raise awareness of how small changes can be taken to manage risks, help prevent accidents, and make the home more child friendly.**

**Sure Start Weston Children's Centre in Southampton has organised a range of activities for local families as part of Child Safety Awareness Day on Wednesday 25 June so that they can find out more about the everyday hazards faced by children both in the home and outdoors.**

The latest figures for accidents in the home involving children aged 0–4 in the South East indicate that in 2006–07, 1,344 children were admitted to hospital as a result of falls. In the same period in the South East, there were 427 children admitted to hospital because of poisoning, 115 with burns/scalds, 15 for choking and 13 because of drowning accidents. [Presumably they mean incidents in which there was a risk of drowning, rather than that they actually died – but this needs clarification.]

Sure Start Weston Children's Centre will be working in partnership with the health team to raise awareness of safety in the home. There will be a raffle with prizes of safety equipment, including bicycle safety helmets, and also a role play hospital to teach parents about looking after children when they have been injured. There will also be leaflets and information from fire and ambulance services, and advice and safety freebies from members of the Sure Start team.

## questions

How would you follow this release up? Who would you talk to and what angle would you be working on?

Don't read on until you have thought about this.

You could preview the event. You could go along to it and do a picture story of the activities. The statistics on the number of young children injured is sobering. You could try to get figures for Southampton, and perhaps to interview the parents of an injured child.

Here's another press release. This one is from Thames Water:

**http://www.thameswater.co.uk/cps/rde/xchg/corp/hs.xsl/5891.htm**

The following is an extract:

## Flood relief on way for Haydon Wick homes

Thames Water announces £8million project to tackle sewer flooding

*New sewers on way for Haydon Wick*

NEW £8M SCHEME TO HELP HAYDON WICK

**Hundreds of homes in Swindon's Haydon Wick area will benefit from a new multi-million programme to protect them from the misery of sewer flooding, Thames Water has announced today.**

**The £8million scheme, which is due to start immediately, will be unveiled by Thames Water's wastewater director Bob Collington, at a special meeting with residents at Haydon Wick Parish Offices this evening.**

**While the scheme is expected to directly protect around 60 homes from flooding, several hundred properties will benefit in terms of improved drainage.**

**Bob Collington said:**

**"No one should have to contend with the misery of sewage flooding their home. The residents of Haydon Wick were not only badly affected by the freak storms of last July, but are at serious risk of being flooded again during future storms.**

**"While we implemented a number of interim measures to help individual properties, it was clear that a major engineering scheme was needed to solve the problem for the future. After months of detailed surveys and planning, I am pleased to announce that we are now ready to begin work on a comprehensive scheme, which will benefit the people of Haydon Wick for years to come.**

**"In the meantime we will continue to work with affected home owners on an individual basis, doing whatever we can to assist them and to minimise the risk of further flooding while this scheme is being implemented."**

### questions

Who would you talk to to take this story forward? What picture opportunities are there?

Don't read on until you have thought about it.

Naturally this release concentrates on the good news, but within it you discover the bad news – that homes in this area were flooded with sewage in the previous July. If you were on a local website you would no doubt have covered the story then. Talking to those affected would help round the story out. What do they think of these measures? Are they reassured? Perhaps some of them are not back in their homes yet.

You might also go to independent experts or pressure groups. Following the flooding in recent years a number of neighbourhoods have campaigned about these issues and gathered expert evidence to support their demands for action. You can tap into this network, perhaps.

For pictures, you could look out archive stills or video of the damage. There will have been pretty dramatic illustrations of the damage and mess then, and these will be much stronger than any image you can obtain now. Current pictures might only be of repairs taking place. You could perhaps do a then and now comparison of one damaged house at the time of the flood and the same house looking spick and span now.

## *A council committee meeting*

Council committees deal with all the hundreds of decisions – small and large – that a local authority has to make. All of them affect people – council tax payers, business rate payers and council employees. If you wade through the thick agendas for council and committee meetings you will find lots of stories. Here is an example:

### *Hastings Borough Council*

This material is all available on the council's website. You'll find the links included below but, to make things easier, they are also on the website.

This link will take you to an overview of council and committee meetings:

**http://www.hastings.gov.uk/meetings/default.aspx**

Once you have selected a meeting you are interested in you can see the agenda, and that gives you notice of interesting items that are up for discussion.

Let's look at a planning meeting:

**http://www.hastings.gov.uk/meetings/default.aspx?showmeetingsmonth=4&showmeetingsyear=8&showdocs=yes&meetingtype=**

You get the agenda and any reports that were before the committee. Reports will be on planning applications where there are concerns or issues to be raised. After the meeting, the minutes – the record of the meeting – will be published.

Here is the agenda:

**http://www.hastings.gov.uk/meetings/meetings_docs/080521~planning_b~agenda~Planning_Committee_(21-05-08)_-_Agenda.htm**

That doesn't tell you much so you need to look at the individual reports on the planning applications that are being considered. Let's take one to look at, an application to demolish an existing building and replace it with 29 flats:

**http://www.hastings.gov.uk/meetings/meetings_docs/080521~planning_b~report05~1-3_Chapel_Park_Road.htm**

Under 'Conclusions and Recommendations' you find out whether the officers – the paid planning experts who work for the council – are recommending approval or rejection of the application. They recommend approval.

Here are the minutes:

**http://www.hastings.gov.uk/meetings/meetings_docs/080521~planning_b~minutes~Planning_Committee_(21-05-08)_-_Minutes.htm**

Here you find out whether the application was approved or not. As you'll see, it was.

What you get from these documents are only the bare bones of a story. From them you could write a couple of pars. But there might be more to it. If you were a reporter on a website or newspaper covering Hastings you would need to rely on your local knowledge to decide whether the story was worth more than this. Perhaps the building being demolished is a significant one. The documents mention one objector who was invited to come along and speak at the meeting but did not. You could try contacting them and asking why they objected.

## *A conference, exhibition or convention*

Journalists on B2B publications regularly attend conferences, exhibitions and conventions. They are often enormous affairs, held at venues such as Olympia in London and the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham.

There will be hundreds of exhibitors and many thousands of visitors. Often an entire industry is represented at such events. A lot of buying and selling occurs. New products and services are introduced. Exhibitors and visitors meet, formally and informally, and discuss

opportunities and threats to the industry, the products, services and performance of key companies operating within it, and which individuals are doing well or badly. A good deal of gossip is exchanged.

All of this gives plenty of opportunity to find stories, make or renew contacts and keep up to speed with the industry you are covering.

Such events are also extremely useful for specialist journalists – the correspondents. A correspondent might specialise in science, technology, crime, health – any number of areas.

## questions

Imagine there is an exhibition on the use of technology in schools. Would there be any difference in the way that a reporter on a B2B publication aimed at IT teachers and a reporter who writes about education for a general publication – *The Times*, say – would cover this event?

Think about that before you read on.

The difference is in the audience each is writing for. The reader of the B2B publication wants to know how what is happening at the event impacts on his or her industry, company and job.

The correspondent on *The Times* is writing for consumers of education – pupils and their parents. They will be looking for stories – and angles on stories – that are relevant to this audience.

As it happens, there is a major exhibition that covers technology in schools. It is called BETT (**http://www.bettshow.com/**) and it is held at Olympia, London, each January. It bills itself like this: "BETT is the world's largest educational technology event." It features hundreds of products and suppliers, and its focus is on "the latest ways to use technology for teaching and learning".

Turning up at an event such as BETT can be daunting, particularly if you are new to the industry it covers and don't have background knowledge and established contacts. But there is no better place to learn about an industry and make those essential contacts.

*How to approach covering an exhibition*

### Plan your coverage

What are you going to do for your magazine or newspaper and on the website? Will you file daily or several times a day from the event? How many text-based news stories can you file? What are the opportunities for multimedia reporting?

### Find out all you can in advance

Read up on the industry, go online and find out if the exhibition has a website that covered previous events. See what happened, look at the stories that came out of past events:

- Find out who the key players are. Will they be there?
- What expert and celebrity guests will there be?
- What seminars, talks or networking opportunities will there be?
- What are the main threats, challenges and opportunities for the industry, and for key players within it?
- What are the new developments?
- What stories and lines of inquiry can you identify in advance?

Do a preview piece on the exhibition. Phone people to find out what will be happening – what their company will be presenting, how much business they expect to be doing.

Tell all you speak to that you will say hello to them at the exhibition.

### When you get there

Go first to the press office. Look at all the press releases, get to know the press officers, use the computers and drink the free coffee.

Plan your day. Work out who you will speak to, in order of importance.

Decide which events – seminars or demonstrations – you will go to.

As you walk around, talk to as many visitors to the exhibition as you can. Why are they here? What products and services are they buying? What interests them the most? Is there anything particularly innovative, inspiring or plain stupid?

Draw up a list of stories and the media you will tell them in.

Think of text stories, stories that can benefit from still pictures, and any opportunities for video reports. There may be demonstrations or performances that will make good video and audio packages.

Look for items you can blog about. This is your chance to give your impressions of the event and pass on some of the gossip you have picked up.

Look for items for a podcast or vodcast.

Think of ways to interact with your audience. Their comment on the event will be very interesting and add enormously to your coverage. Are there themes you'd like to encourage them to chat about? Are there issues they might like to vote on – if so, set up a poll.

**on the website**

- See how a major exhibition was covered.

1A9

## Exercises and projects

The exercises relate directly to material covered in this chapter.

The projects are wider, longer-term enterprises that you will be able to develop as you work your way through this book.

### Exercise 1

Monitor a breaking news source for a day. You could use the BBC website, or an agency such as Reuters. Look for stories that are breaking, and see how they develop during the day.

If you are part of a group, divide the day into blocks, or shifts. Take an hour or two each to monitor the news. Cover several sources – two or more agencies, or two or more news outlets – and keep a log of what story breaks, when, and how it develops. See who is first with this news and how fast rivals catch up with it.

### Exercise 2

Take a story that is high in today's news agenda and see how it has been handled in various media. If you can, pick a story that has local, national and specialist-audience interest. Look at how it is handled for a local audience, a national one and a specialist one.

### Exercise 3

Take a range of press releases that relate to a particular audience and follow them up.

### Exercise 4

Go to the website of your local police force. Take a day's news releases – or a week's if you prefer. Select the most promising stories and follow them up.

### Exercise 5

Take your local council and check the agendas of forthcoming committee and council meetings. Although anything a committee decides must be ratified by the full council, they almost always do this, so it is the committees where the stories unfold and you get the detail you need. Select one or more committee meetings that look interesting from the agendas, look at any reports and try to identify some interesting stories.

You might be able to pursue the stories before the committee meeting, particularly if there is a clearly controversial matter that will be debated. You can talk to the protagonists and write a story before the meeting. Go to the meeting and write reports on a number of items. Aim for a couple of stories of about 200 words, and five briefs of about 50 words.

### Exercise 6

Pick an exhibition or convention that is taking place somewhere convenient for you to get to. Think of a publication that would cover the exhibition, and the audience it would write for. Obtain press accreditation and the advance material issued by the organisers. Try to identify some issues that could make stories. Go to the event, pick up interesting press releases, interview relevant people and write three stories of 200 words each. Also write five news-in-brief stories of 50 words each.

### Projects

***Creating multimedia news sites for clearly defined audiences***

These projects can be developed as part of group work on a journalism course, or informally by groups of students, or by individuals.

The best way to get good at writing for an audience is to do it.

Pick two clearly defined audiences you are going to write for. You are going to create multimedia news sites for those audiences.

These sites will develop into substantial demonstration of your all-round abilities as a multimedia journalist. They will give you a focus for many of the exercises, and all of the practical guidance, that you will find in this book and on the accompanying website.

Your newspapers and magazines do not have to have a print edition, but if you are able to produce one that would be good. Primarily what you will be working towards is two web-based publications that use the full range of multimedia storytelling skills. So far we have looked only at news writing and text reporting. As you work your way through this book you will learn about other writing – features, interviews and so on – and also about storytelling through audio, stills photography and video. As you move along you will be able to practise these skills on your projects.

Here are some areas in which you might consider creating projects.

**A LOCAL WEBSITE**

To get used to writing for people in an area, define a place you are going to cover. It might be a university campus, a college, an estate, a tower block or a postal code area. You could cover a village or a town, but that's a broad canvas, and will be too challenging unless you are tackling this project as part of a group.

**A PROFESSION, A TRADE OR AN INDUSTRY**

Magazines, newspapers and websites that cover a trade, profession or an industry are called business to business or B2B titles. Learn to write for such a group and you will be demonstrating a second highly marketable skill.

You should probably keep your magazine's subject matter within clearly identified limits – by both subject and geography. So, for example, you might choose to run a magazine for stall-holders at Camden Market in London, or for traders in a particular city centre or major shopping mall.

Tackling a national magazine can add too many logistical challenges – getting reporters out to remote places to conduct interviews, take pictures and film reports, for example.

If you are planning a B2B title, you need to focus on helping your reader do their job or run their business better, and to understand their industry more clearly. Through informing them you are helping them make sound business decisions and to make – or save – money. Typical B2B magazines include *Management Today*, which is for those in management roles, and *GP*, which is for family doctors (general practitioners).

**A SPORT, HOBBY OR PASTIME**

These magazines are called specialist consumer titles. They are for a group of people who can easily be defined through their interest in a particular activity. You could, for example, run a magazine for footballers in a particular amateur league, for those involved in amateur dramatics or who go to live gigs in a particular area. Go for something you know and/or have an interest in.

**A GENERAL INTEREST MAGAZINE**

In contrast to specialist consumer titles, we have general consumer titles. The difference is in the range of content they cover. *Time* is general interest, *Your Cat* is specialist interest. If you plan a general interest magazine, beware of giving yourself too wide a brief. It can be hard to focus on your audience if you are covering too much.

### *How to choose your projects*

In order to demonstrate your ability to write for different audiences, and in different types of publication, we suggest that you choose contrasting projects.

If one is local, then you will demonstrate your ability to work on a local newspaper. There are around 1,300 of those in the UK.

If the other is B2B, you will demonstrate your understanding of that market. And it is a key one for newly qualified journalists. Of the 9,000 magazines in the UK, around 7,500 are B2B. It is much more likely you'll get your first job on a B2B than on a consumer title.

### *To firm up your ideas do these things for each of your projects*

- Choose a name for the publication
- Write a short descriptive line that supplements your title
- Come up with a 50-word "mission statement" that says what the purpose of your publication is, who its audience is and how it will be of value to them
- Write a description of a typical member of your audience. Think about their interests and concerns
- Come up with some content ideas. Think about news areas that you will cover, and other content and services that will be of interest and value to your reader.

### *Now I want you to create some news stories for each of your website projects*

You will need these news stories to work on in the next chapter, where we will build your websites and create your blogs.

For each of your websites, write five news stories. They should be of at least 200 words, and can be up to 400.

### *Come up with a subject on which you would like to blog*

Make it something you have a keen interest in, about which you are knowledgeable and which offers plenty of scope for reporting and comment. For example, if you go to a lot of live gigs, follow football closely or are very interested in cinema, you have the basis for a blog.

You might have a very esoteric hobby or interest. When it comes to blogging, having a keen interest in a narrow area can help give focus to what you write. Maybe you want to blog about just one band, or one actor or director.

Gather some ideas for a couple of initial posts. Do some research into the subject you are covering. Identify good sources of information and other interesting blogs. See what multimedia elements you might be able to link to or cut and paste into your site. Perhaps there are relevant videos on YouTube or elsewhere. For now, just get some ideas together so that when we start building a blog in Chapter Two you have some content to put into it.

chapter two

# *Creating a publishing platform*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

Here we will look at how to create a simple website on which to present the news that you write in the exercises and projects that accompany each chapter of the book. We will also create a blog and post to it.

Specifically, we will cover:

- What a home or welcome page is and what it should contain
- How to create a logical structure for a website
- How to make a website easy to navigate
- How to make content easy to read
- How to lay out a blog
- How to integrate multimedia content on a website or blog
- Measuring the success of a website or blog.

At the end of the chapter are a range of exercises and projects to enable you to practise what you have learned.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- All the links you need to follow the tutorial in this chapter
- A wide range of videos illustrating the material covered here
- Comment threads on creating publishing platforms
- Masterclasses on building blogs and websites
- A wealth of links to further information.

At the end of the last chapter we got working on some multimedia projects – two websites and a blog. Now we are going to create the publishing platforms for these projects. I am going to use free, readily available programs to do this.

If you have access to other programs, all well and good. In that case you can gloss over the specifics of how to use the particular programs I have chosen.

But what I will be saying about content – and organising and presenting that content – is relevant to you whatever program you are using. You can't say this too often – with multimedia journalism, content is king. It's the quality of the journalism that matters, and the only way to judge the platforms we use is how effectively they allow us to deliver that journalism to our audience.

We will keep it very simple to start with, but the platforms I am using here will give us a place to publish the stories you wrote as part of the projects at the end of Chapter One and, as we move on through Part A of the book, the audio, video and stills photography that we also create.

I'll take you through the process. You can mirror what I do, creating your own sites and adding the news stories you have written to them. We'll also create a blog, and the research you did, and the ideas for some first posts that you have been working on, will give you some content to put in it.

**on the website**

- **Find the examples I give in the book. As you work through this chapter in the book it is probably a good idea to have the web version on screen on a browser tag, and the site you are building on another. That way you can refer to book or web, as seems easier.**

2A1

## Creating a website

I'm going to use a service called Webs. There are plenty of other free web hosting companies, and you can take a look at a number and decide which works best for you. I'm using Webs because it is very easy to use. Here's what you do. (Any future changes in this process will be covered on the website.)

Log on to **www.webs.com**. Here is a screen grab of what you will see:

You pick a site address, a password and click to create your site. That site address gets tagged on to the Webs URL so that you get a web address that looks like this: **www.webs.com/yoursitename** (yoursitename being the name you have given your publication). The URL you choose is important. To help people find you, and remember it, it should be the same as the title you will put on your website's home page.

I've created one called **www.webs.com/multimediajournalism** to demonstrate the techniques covered in this section of the book. On the next screen I give my site the name that readers will see and fill in the rest of the registration process.

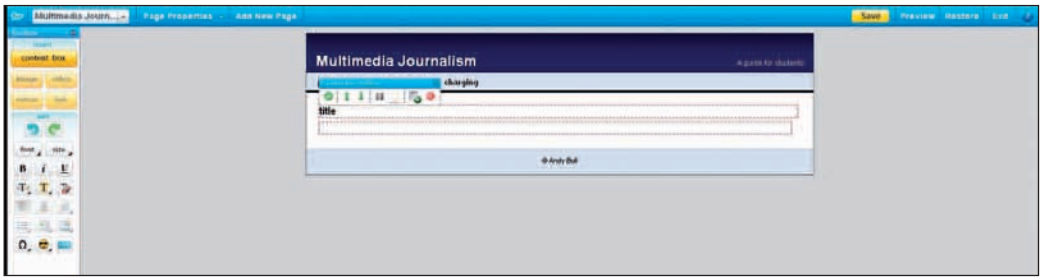
Then I'm asked to select a template for my site. The template determines the design for your site's pages.

Select a Template for your Site
Choose from one of our 300+ templates to get started. You can change your template at any time.
Already have a site to upload and don't want to use our Site Builder tools? Use Advanced (HTML) Mode
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Medieval
Scenic
Seasonal
Written
Clean Splash
Chic
Ritual
Delight

A lot of them are, frankly, pretty ugly and messy. Go for a very simple one. I've chosen one called **Clean as a Whistle**. Next you select the type of site you will create – I have gone for basic, but you might like to experiment – and are given some starter pages. Now you can begin to create your site and its content.

The first page you must create is your home page.

Your page has an empty content area. Hover over it and a small dialogue comes up top left. It gives you various options.




The middle symbol is of two columns of type. Hover over it and you will see it asks you how many columns you would like on the page. Click on it.

I'm going to have a three-column page. That means I can have the main content of my home page in the middle column. Although I am putting my main navigation – to key sections of the site – on the horizontal bar above my main content area, I also want navigation – links to individual stories both on my site and elsewhere – and I'm going to put that in the narrow column on the right. In the column on the left I can put other things. They might be items designed to engage with the reader, such as a poll on a current topic. We'll come back to what to put in these narrow columns later.

After I make my choice, two grey vertical lines appear within my content area. I can click on them and move them around. I want narrow columns at each side and a wide one in the middle of my home page.

The content area is very shallow because I haven't put any content into it yet. I want this page to include my latest headlines, so I'll give a title of **Latest News**.

In my central column I want to run heads and sells for my five latest stories. Here they are, pasted in.

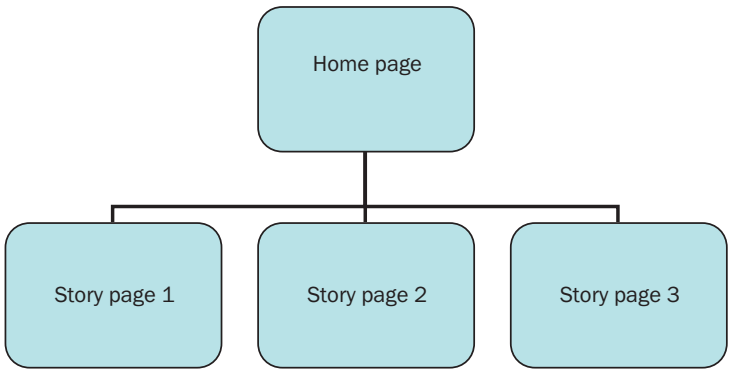
Don't worry, for now, about where the rest of each story goes. We'll look at that in a minute.

## How to create a logical structure for a website

So that's the home page begun. Now we need to think about the rest of the site. That means we need to work out its structure. It is worth thinking of a website as being a bit like a family tree. The home page is at the top of the tree and is at the head of the family. It's the parent page. We can create subsidiary screens to this one, and they are like children to that parent page.

The reader goes to the parent page first – that's the home page and the point from which they start reading our stories. When they decide to read more than just the head and sell they click more and are taken to the child page.

Here's what I mean:




In fact, there are more than two layers – levels of navigation, to use the technical term – to anything but the very simplest of websites. Each new level we create takes its place on a new line. So a typical site might have four or five levels of navigation – or generations in its family tree. But more of that later.

For now, we have our heads and sells, and they need to link to the main body of the copy we have written about them.

## Building links from your news heads and sells to the full stories

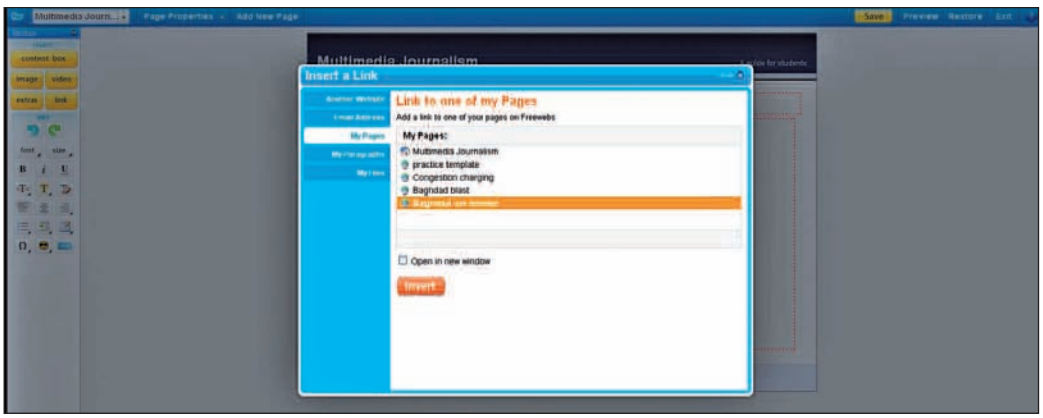
First we need to create a page for each of our stories. Click the **New Page** button and you get a fresh, empty template. Give it a name. Divide the template into two columns – if you don't the text will run across a very wide measure and be impossible to read easily.

Now cut and paste your headline and copy into the template.

The name you have given this template would normally appear on the navigation panel on the home page. We are going to turn off the names of individual story templates by clicking on the **Page Properties** button and selecting **hide from navbar** on the drop-down list that appears. We are doing that to avoid having a huge list of individual stories in the nav. Instead we can include main sub-pages – second-generation or second-level pages such as head and sell pages for features, comment, sport and so on – and ensure that navigation is simple, clear and logical.

At any time you can click on the **Preview** button to see how your page will look when it is published. When you are finished with a page, click **Save**. You get the option of publishing it or saving it as a draft. Save it as a draft if you aren't ready for the world to see it yet.

Now we need to link the story page with the home page. We do that by going to the home page and adding the word 'More . . .' to the end of each of our sells. Highlight the word 'More . . .' and click on the yellow **Link** button top left. A dialogue box comes up. Click on the **My Pages** option and a list of the pages you have created comes up. Click on the one you want to link to.



Repeat this process for each story you want to link to. Once this is done, you will have all your stories linked to their respective heads and sells.

By the way, you can link to stories from headlines, pictures or other elements if you want to.

The first section of your very basic website is now complete.

## *How to make a website easy to navigate*

Our website will be easy to navigate if the structure is clear and logical, and if we provide links that mirror the paths readers would like to take to get from one piece of information to the next. There must always be a link back to the home page from wherever the reader is on the site. We'll also add other links back to key places on the site as we build it.

The stories we have worked on are simple, one-page units of information. With more complex subjects we might want to create some additional supplementary screens that lead off from this page. We'll tackle this next.

## *Thinking in screens – creating a content area within your website*

Let's say we have a more complex story to tell. It's going to be far too long to include all the information we have on one screen. Instead, we need to split it across several screens.

To do that effectively we need to think how the material will break logically. Also, if it is fairly detailed, we need to make sure we introduce it effectively, so that the scanner can see what is on offer and – we hope – make the effort to go through it.

This approach to organising web content is known as thinking in screens.

I'm going to give you an example of doing this by creating a piece of content called **News Focus**. I'm going to give it that title, and allow a link to appear on our nav bar.

The content on this first page is going to summarise the news focus, and introduce the main elements of it. A scanner might just read this and go no further, and still get an idea of the scope of the material. But I'm also going to link from this summary screen to several other screens, each of which goes into more detail on a particular aspect of my topic.

I'm going to write a news focus on the subject of labyrinths. The peg for writing this piece now is that a new labyrinth is being created at the University of Kent, close to Canterbury Cathedral. My first screen will cover that and also give a brief overview of the subject of labyrinths. It will cover a number of elements:

- The eight surviving turf labyrinths in England
- The 4,000-year history of labyrinths, from ancient Greece to the present day
- The people who are creating labyrinths today and how they do it.

I'm going to add one or two pictures too. You may have noticed as you look at news websites that many have an image at the top of each story. Often these images are stock ones – they are general images chosen for their general relevance to the subject and don't really add much to the story. But they do make the page look more interesting. You'll see a button on the Webs editing panel for adding an image to your template. I'm going to cover that process in Chapter Three, on still images.

I also need to add a head and sell to my home page, and a link from that sell to the first page of my **News Focus**. This gives a second way of navigating to the story – the other is from the nav bar. Often you will find two or more ways to do the same thing on a website.

Here's my main labyrinth page:

My links to other pages can appear in several places. They can go within the text, at the bottom of the text or alongside it. I've chosen to put them at the bottom of the text.

One thing we must be sure of is that we don't confuse the reader by making our links to other parts of our story look like links to other sites. I'm putting such story links in bold, which I hope distinguishes them sufficiently from the external links that you see on the right-hand side of the grab below, which is of one of my subsidiary pages – the one about the English turf mazes.

I go on to create, populate and link my other subsidiary pages to my main **News Focus** one.

## *How to make content easy to read*

We do that by making our story scannable. We follow the principles of copy organisation and presentation that we worked through in Chapter One. With the simple stories we have worked on so far, all that is needed really are some side heads to break the text up into logical blocks of information, and give the scanner an idea of what they will find if they read on from any of the side heads. When you come to the exercises and projects at the end of this chapter, you'll have to use your judgement and decide what devices are appropriate for each piece of copy you produce.

What we must avoid are grey slabs of text that the scanner will fail to engage with. Often, if we are converting text that has been written by an old-school journalist, or for a print publication, we find that the text really needs making scannable before we can publish it online.

## *Adding content to the narrow columns on your home page*

For now, let's look at an easy way to enhance our site and add useful functions to it. Open your home page in editing mode and click on the yellow button top left marked **Extras**. You'll find yourself in a directory of what are known as widgets. These are little gadgets that contain anything from video and music feeds to news headlines, weather reports and polling applications so you can ask your readers to vote on a particular topic.

I'm going to add a polling widget to the top of my left-hand column – posing a timely question – and a news headline widget to the top of the right-hand column.

So that's the basics of building a website. You have created only a very simple site for now, but we can build on it and make it a great deal more sophisticated. More on that later. Meanwhile, let's look at some examples.

## *Some examples of website structure*

Let's take a look at three news websites and see how they structure things, and how they handle heads and sells.

### *bbc.co.uk*

News is just one element of the BBC's site and so space is tight. There are just a handful of headlines, and one picture, top left.

Taking one point on one day at random (20 May 2009), the headlines were these:

- Harman sets out expenses reforms
- Abuse 'endemic' at institutions
- Drug smuggling cricketer jailed.

Click on one of those heads and you go through to the story page.

The one about the cricketer has the same short head and a sell:

**Drug smuggling cricketer jailed**

**Former England cricketer Chris Lewis has been jailed for 13 years for smuggling cocaine into Britain.**

**(bbc.co.uk, 20 May 2009)**

There is another way to get to this story, and that is to click first from the general home page to the main news home page. Here we find a slightly longer sell:

**Drug smuggling cricketer jailed**

Former England cricketer Chris Lewis is jailed for 13 years for bringing drugs into the UK from St Lucia hidden in his cricket bag.

(bbc.co.uk, 20 May 2009)

*Guardian.co.uk*

guardian.co.uk
French students in fire-bomb stabbed
Concorde crash: Continental on trial
PM hints at U-turn over fuel duty
Colombians trick rebels into freeing Betancourt
The time to act is now
Chambers challenges Olympic ban
British-born teenager trafficked
US teacher suspended over book

Copyright: the *Guardian*.

Take the ringed story headlined "PM hints at U-turn over fuel duty". If we click through, we find the same head and sell at the top of the full story.

Copyright: the *Guardian*.

Not all sites repeat the sells that appear on the main news page on the full story page you click through to. Instead, they go for a different first par – or a longer version of the sell that appeared on the main news page.

Headlines should always be repeated, for one very good reason – so that the reader knows they have come to the right place. A different headline might make them think they had clicked the wrong link and were not on the story they wanted to read.

Here is the *Mirror* home page, at **www.mirror.co.uk**:

You'll see the headlines are long – almost a combination of head and sell in one. Look at the one about the French students: "Murdered French students found in London flat were 'tortured, stabbed to death and set on fire'".

Mirror
.co.uk
Is that okay with you?
Murdered French students found in London flat were 'tortured, stabbed to death and set on fire'
Build your perfect Sky TV experience
sky

That home page text, which is 16 words long, is a clickable link to the subsidiary page containing the full story.

Traditionally, headlines on tabloid newspapers are short and sharp. On the web, the *Mirror* is doing something different. It is putting in as many key words, as they are known, in the head as it can. Key words are the ones anyone searching after the story is likely to tap into Google or another search engine. Get a good mix between your headline words and the search words readers use, and you move up the ratings towards the top of the first page of search results, which is where everyone wants to be.

This process is called search engine optimisation, and we will look at it in detail later. Whatever form you use – just short heads, heads and sells or long hybrid head/sells – you want to get those key words in.

Let's leave websites for now, and look at blogs.

- News websites change – check out the latest use of heads and sells
- Watch videos on creating a Webs website
- Submit your questions for a website masterclass.

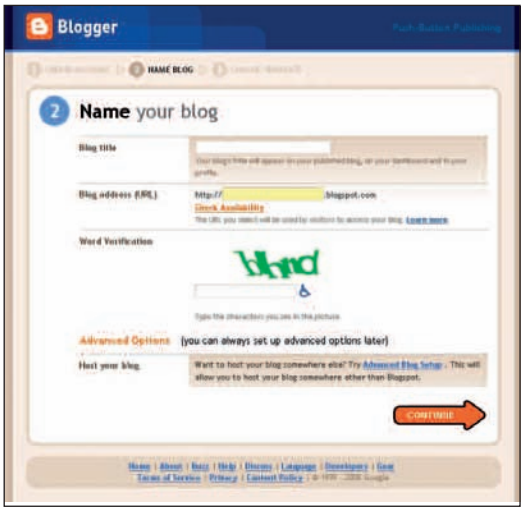
2A2

## How to create a blog

I'm going to use the Blogger.com site to demonstrate creating a blog. There are plenty of others, but Blogger is simple to use and very popular.

Once you have set up your account you get to create your blog at the following screen.

Once again, you need a good name. If your blog is closely allied to your website, you might



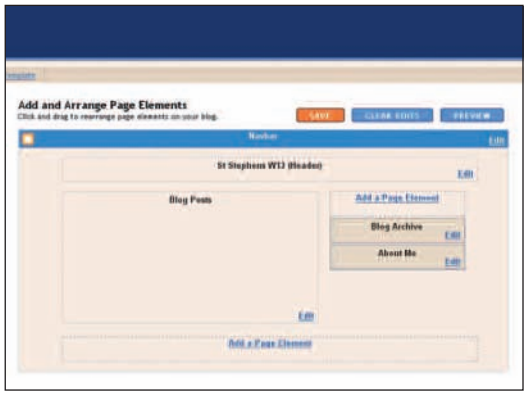

want to make that link clear by going for a name with clear associations. For example, if your website is about gigs in a town, if it also previews and reviews performances, and carries interviews with band members, you might want to write a blog which is – say – the view from the mosh pit or the VIP area, if you can wangle your way into enough of them to make this work. Maybe you are an obsessive fan of a particular band and follow them around the country – possibly the world. While that band might only appear periodically on your website, in your blog you might write about them almost exclusively.

It's also worth remembering that blogs don't have to be written by just one person. Several people can collaborate on a blog if its subject matter is clearly defined and they stick to it. Collaborative blogs can be very lively and interesting, as they represent a continuing discussion on issues as they develop.

Your blog might be completely different in subject matter from your website project.

As an example, I've created a blog that focuses on the immediate area where I live. It's a handful of streets in London W13 that make up the St Stephen's Conservation Area. People in this area, I figure, have a shared interest in the place and so I've created what, to use the jargon, is a hyper-local blog.

Blogger takes just a couple of minutes to set up. You choose a template and can then add elements to your page.




Click on the text that says **Add elements** and you'll see the choice you have. Among the many options are to add picture slide shows, lists of your favourite blogs, of the blogs that you are reading, polls (inviting readers to vote on a topic), pictures, links, a video bar of items selected from YouTube or Google, and news headlines.

What this means is that while you might create a certain amount of the content on your blog, you can also draw on a wealth of other material, drawing it together as you see fit.

I'm going to add a range of elements and then look for content to put in them. I'm going to be guided by what I think, as a resident, are the concerns of my neighbours.

One, I reckon, is the number of drunks who wake us up at two or three o'clock on a Saturday or Sunday morning as they weave their way home from the clubs in Ealing Broadway. I'll put up a poll on that. In doing so I have taken my first step in interacting with the readers of my site.

## *A blog is a conversation*

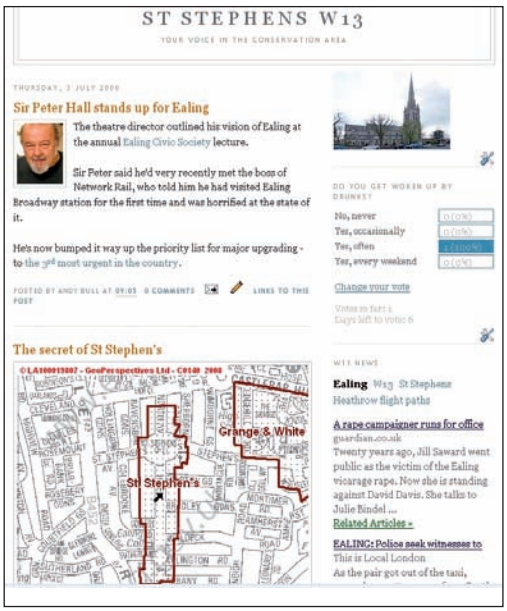
This is one of the key tenets of online publication. Rather than following the offline formula of announcing "Here is the news", we conduct a conversation with the readers of our sites and blogs. We ask them what they think, and invite them to comment on our stories and posts.

I also add a news feed of text and video from local websites, and links to the council's press release service and other community websites.

I set up a picture feed from Picasa (http://picasa.google.com/) that rotates a range of images from my area. Picasa is owned by Google – as is Blogger. You can add both of them to a Google account.

I've written nothing yet but already I have a content-rich site.

Now I add some posts, from the issues I know concern residents.


ST STEPHENS W13
YOUR VOICE IN THE CONSERVATION AREA
Sir Peter Hall stands up for Ealing
The theatre director outlined his vision of Ealing at the annual Ealing Civic Society lecture.
Sir Peter said he'd very recently met the boss of Network Rail, who told him he had visited Ealing Broadway station for the first time and was horrified at the state of it.
He's now bumped it way up the priority list for major upgrading - to the 3rd most urgent in the country.
The secret of St Stephen's
Grange & White
St Stephen's
Ealing W13 St Stephens
Heathrow flight paths
A rape campaigner runs for office
guardian.co.uk
Twenty years ago, Jill Saward went public as the victim of the Ealing vicarage rape. Now she is standing against David Davis. She talks to Julie Bindel ...
Related Articles »
EALING: Police seek witnesses to
This is Local London

I include links to my source material and other sites or blogs that are relevant to my post.

**on the website**

- Watch video tutorials on creating a blog
- Submit your blogs for expert comment.

2A3

## How to integrate multimedia content

We are going to go on in the chapters that follow to create still images and slide shows, videos and audio. For now, let's look at how you can add multimedia content that others have created.

It is very easy to add multimedia content to the site and the blog that we have created. You've probably seen the buttons enabling you to do that already.

Both Webs and Blogger have buttons that invite you to upload still photographs and video. You can take that material from your own computer or search for it online.

One thing I need to mention immediately is the question of copyright. Essentially, you must remember that everything that is created and posted online belongs to someone. The originator of this material has rights over its use. The web tends to be a fairly free and easy place but, as responsible journalists, we can't afford to use material that is not ours unless we have permission – or implied permission – to do so.

There are places where material is made freely available. On Wikipedia (**www.wikipedia.com**) many images are part of what is called Wikipedia Commons. This means they have been posted by photographers who are happy for them to be used elsewhere.

## *Using YouTube*

The originators of many of the videos posted on YouTube (**www.youtube.com**) and similar video sharing sites are happy for it to be copied. Video posts on such sites give you the option of copying a link to the video or embedding code into your blog or website which means that it actually appears on your site or blog.

There are plenty that I could post on my St Stephens W13 blog.

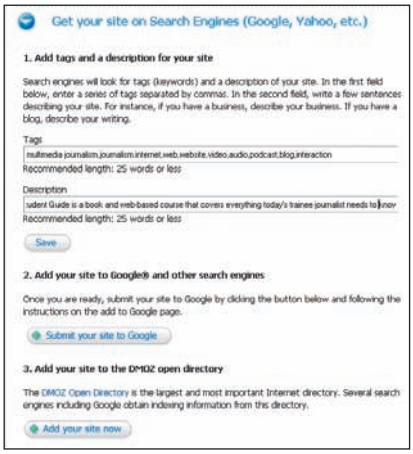
I've picked one about Ealing Studios, where the series of movies known collectively as Ealing Comedies were created in the 1940s and 1950s.

2A4

## Getting your blog and sites seen – and measuring their success

To get your site seen you must submit it to the search engines. Click on the **Stats and Promotions** button on Webs and the options for doing this appear.

Pick the **Get your site on Search Engines** button and a dialogue box opens that explains how to tag and describe your site in terms that the search engines will understand and from which they can categorise it.


Get your site on Search Engines (Google, Yahoo, etc.)
1. Add tags and a description for your site
Search engines will look for tags (keywords) and a description of your site. In the first field below, enter a series of tags separated by commas. In the second field, write a few sentences describing your site. For instance, if you have a business, describe your business. If you have a blog, describe your writing.
Tags
multimedia,journalism,journalism.internet,web,website,video,audio,podcast,blog,interaction
Recommended length: 25 words or less
Description
udent Guide is a book and web-based course that covers everything today's trainee journalist needs to know
Recommended length: 25 words or less
Save
2. Add your site to Google® and other search engines
Once you are ready, submit your site to Google by clicking the button below and following the instructions on the add to Google page.
Submit your site to Google
3. Add your site to the DMOZ open directory
The DMOZ Open Directory is the largest and most important Internet directory. Several search engines including Google obtain indexing information from this directory.
Add your site now

To measure your site's success you need a web stats service. Webs provides one, but you can also use an external service. A stats service will enable you to see exactly who is coming to your website, the search terms they used to find you and what they did once they arrived. There are a number of free ones. I use **www.statcounter.com**.

Once you have registered and submitted your site's URL you can choose which of a number of counters – with public or private results – you want on your site.

Once you have made your choices, the site generates some html code that you need to cut and paste into your home page. That might sound tough, but it's not. Position your cursor in your home page at the point where you'd like the little stat counter logo – called a widget – to appear, and then click on the blue button in the bottom left of the control panel. This opens a box, into which you paste the html code.

Save, then publish, and your **Statcounter** widget appears. Once your site is up and running, check back to see what traffic you are getting.

For more help adding a counter to Blogger, go to **www.help.blogger.com**.

## on the website

- Watch videos on creating and running your blog
- Watch regular blogging masterclasses.

2A5

## Exercises and projects

### Exercise 1

Take a website that interests you and analyse its content and structure. Look at the policy on the use of heads and sells. How long are they? Look at how they link to individual news pages. See if you can draw a structure diagram – in family-tree form – for the site. Is it logically organised? How are links back from individual items handled?

### Exercise 2

Pick a busy blog that you like and follow it closely for a week. How often does the blogger post? How long are the posts? What is their content made up of? How reliant is the blogger on links to other blogs? Do they use pictures and video? If so, what do these add to the blog? How many links do they include in each blog?

### Exercise 3

Look for some areas on websites where a number of screens have been grouped together to cover a particular story. Look at how this has been done.

Has an initial screen been written that summarises the subject and contains links to other screens that cover aspects of the story in more detail? How many external links are there?

### Exercise 4

Subscribe to at least 10 RSS feeds that provide information relevant to your websites and blog. Monitor them at least once a day and follow up any stories that they offer.

## Projects

We are going to create some more content for your websites and blog.

### *Over the next week*

1 Write five news stories of between 300 and 400 words for each of your websites, following the guidance in Chapter One on how to write and structure text for the web. Publish those stories online, giving them heads and sells and using side headings and bulleted lists as appropriate.

2 Post to your blog at least daily for a week. Get into the habit of posting short items at regular intervals. Remember, these don't have to be well-crafted stories. They can be just a group of links to something you find interesting and want to draw to your reader's attention. Find some video to embed in your blog.

3 Register your sites and blog with the major search engines. Set up stat counters on each site.

4 Tell us about your sites and blog. Send us links to them so we can introduce other readers to what you are doing.

chapter three

# *Still pictures*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

- Digital cameras and picture-editing equipment
- Shooting pictures
- Cropping and editing
- Captioning
- Telling stories through picture galleries and slide shows
- Publishing pictures on websites and blogs.

At the end of the chapter are a range of exercises and projects to enable you to practise what you have learned.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- An interactive quiz to test your understanding of the principles of picture taking and editing
- A wide range of videos illustrating the material covered here
- A wealth of links to further information.

3A1

## Introduction

Much photography is either routine – which anyone can do – or opportunistic. That means, if you are in the right place at the right time and you happen to have a camera or a mobile phone with you, you can grab pics that have news (and commercial) value. The final portion is photography that needs a really well-trained and talented professional photographer. We aren't going to cover that area in this book/website. But the first two leave us loads of scope, and cover the majority of news photography for print and the web.

Not every story needs a picture, and not all pictures can be taken by the general reporter. So how do we decide whether a picture is needed, and whether we need a photographic specialist to take it?

With multimedia journalism, one key determinant of the need for pictures is whether a story can be told better, or more easily or clearly, with the addition of one or more pictures. We also need to bear in mind that online a story of any length can look very dull without a picture. Many websites use templates that require a picture to be added to the story – often top right of the text. This can mean that an awful lot of stock, generic pictures are used which don't have any direct relevance to the particular story. Such pictures will usually come from a database; a reporter won't usually be expected to take them.

Mug shots – straightforward head and shoulders portraits of the people involved in a story – can also be very useful. If we feature a particular individual regularly on our website or in our newspaper or magazine, we will probably have pictures of them on file. But it is a very good idea to get into the habit of taking straightforward pictures of people when we interview them.

In this chapter we are going to look at taking straightforward pictures – the sort that anyone, with a bit of guidance, can take with a simple digital camera or on their camera phone – and also at telling stories through a sequence of still images. We'll also cover publishing these pictures on your websites and blog.

In later sections we will develop your photographic knowledge and ability so that you can take more sophisticated pictures, in challenging circumstances. In Chapter Five we will show you how to add an audio track to a picture sequence to create an audio slide show.

But it is worth just making clear the limits of what a general reporter can do photographically.

Unless you are particularly gifted as a photographer there are certain areas of photography that are best left to the specialist stills and/or video photographer. Sports action shots are one such area. To capture a shot at goal in football or a tennis ball sending up a puff of chalk dust as it bounces on the line takes a great deal of skill, and sophisticated equipment. The multimedia journalist is generally not going to achieve such a high level of skill.

3A2

## Digital cameras

When talking about digital cameras and pictures we talk about pixels. So what's a pixel? Pixel is short for picture element. A pixel is a single rectangular point in a larger graphic image composed of many such points.

Computer monitors can display pictures because the screen is divided into millions of pixels arranged in rows and columns.

Take a look at the technical specification of any digital camera and you will see it has a pixel rating expressed in megapixels. A megapixel is a million pixels. Each pixel is one element of data, one tiny pinpoint of information about the scene you have captured. Add all those dots together and you have the digital version of the scene you photographed.

The power of a digital camera is measured through its megapixel rating. To give you an idea of how a megapixel rating converts into the size and quality of the picture you can take, let's look at a basic, 3.2 megapixel camera. Such a camera can take a picture that is 2,048 pixels by 1,536 pixels. Multiply the second figure by the first and you get 3,145,728 pixels. As with the cc rating on cars, the makers round the figure up to 3.2 for marketing purposes.

A 3.2 megapixel camera can take a high-quality image that measures about 180 mm by 130 mm, which is about the size of a standard snapshot, and would be enough for a standard size picture for a newsprint publication, but not for anything larger than, say, four columns wide. It follows that a 6 megapixel camera can take an image twice as big, and a 9 megapixel three times as large.

Digital cameras store the images they contain on a memory card – a reusable storage device. You can lower the number of pixels that are contained in the image you take, but that will lower the quality of the photograph.

Does that matter?

That all depends on the medium you will publish it in. Because the other measure of a photograph is its resolution. Resolution is the number of pixels in an image of any given size. Most computer monitors display images at 72 pixels per square inch – 72ppi. They do that to speed up download times, so your reader is not left waiting for images to load in a page. Newspapers are usually printed in 200ppi, and glossy magazines at 300ppi. This means that, while you don't need a high-quality image for a website, you need a reasonably good one for general print and a high-quality one for a glossy magazine.

If you've ever taken an image from a website and printed it out – as part of a document perhaps – you find that the dots that make up the picture are visible. So it follows that you can't use an image taken for the web in a print publication unless you are prepared to put up with poor-quality reproduction.

Conversely, if you have a high-quality image and are going to use it on a website, you need to compress it – reduce the number of pixels it contains. We can do that easily with any piece of digital picture-editing equipment.

One final piece of acronym soup for you to get your head around relates to the various formats digital images can be in. We aren't going to go into too much detail about that now, but here is a quick run-through.

The three most common are TIF, JPG and GIF.

These are different ways to encode an image. Each format is good for some uses and not so good for others. Web pages must have pictures encoded as either JPG, GIF or another format called PNG because browsers can only show these three. On websites, JPG (pronounced jpeg but actually standing for Joint Photography Editors' Group) is best for photographs because it produces the smallest file sizes, and small files mean fast downloads. It does, however, cause some loss of image quality. GIF (Graphic Interchange Format) is used most commonly for graphic images – diagrams, tables and charts: artwork, to use another name for it. TIF is most often used away from the web when high-quality images are needed.

For now, we are going to use jpegs. Your camera will use jpegs, although it might also offer TIF and yet another format, called RAW. We won't worry about them for now.

3A3

## Shooting pictures

Many mobile phones have sophisticated cameras in them, and may well be good enough to take pictures for the web and print. However, they will probably only have a fixed lens, which means that you won't be able to get up close to your subject without putting the camera pretty much in their face. Such a camera will be good enough to learn the basics of photography in this chapter, but a more sophisticated camera would be better for later sections.

In this chapter we are going to use the automatic settings on your camera – where the camera decides, for example, whether flash is needed or not, and sorts out focus. In later chapters we will look at turning those settings off and being more creative with our photography.

Get into the habit of taking lots of pictures as you go about your reporting duties. If you are at an event where many people are taking part, and a number of activities are happening, then you have a good opportunity to shoot a sequence of pictures that will tell the story of the event through still images. So a carnival, battle of the bands, talent show, exhibition or convention will give you the opportunity to capture the event photographically.

The great advantage of a digital camera is that you can see each picture as you take it. That means you can make sure you are happy with what you have shot before you move on and lose the chance to correct things. Use that opportunity. Always check that you have a good image – even if you are only taking a head and shoulders. Look for things to improve in the image you have shot and put any problems right in your next shot.

Here are some basics you need to think about while you are shooting.

## *Light*

There are three types of photographic lighting:

- Natural – or available or ambient – light
- Flash as the main light source
- A mix of ambient light and flash.

Shooting in bright sunlight poses problems. If you have the sun on your subjects' faces, it can cast deep, ugly shadows. If you have bright sun behind your subjects, they can be thrown into complete shadow. Be careful to avoid placing your subject between you and a brightly lit window. If your early shots throw up such problems, try to move your subjects into less harsh light.

Wherever possible, use available light. Flash can cause red eye, which will need fixing in your photo-editing software, and can bring shiny spots to people's faces. If you don't have enough light, see if you can move your subject to somewhere brighter.

A clear indication of not having enough light comes when your camera flash comes on automatically.

## *Get in close*

Fill the frame with your subject. Remember that – particularly if your picture is going on to a website, the image is going to be small. A straightforward mug shot (showing head and shoulders only) will probably only be something like 25 mm wide and 35 mm tall. Your subject's face should be near the top of the photo, not in the middle. If you leave a lot of space around your subject when you shoot, you'll have to crop it out when you come to edit.

## *Keep your pictures simple*

Particularly with the web, your image must not be cluttered up with lots of small items. If it is, they will be very hard to make out on screen. So go for detail. If you are photographing a

display of prize-winning flowers, you'd be best to concentrate on one bunch of flowers, or even one bloom. If you want the winner and the bloom in one shot, get them to hold the flower up to their face, so you can crop in tight.

If you have to photograph a shop or a factory, go for a detail – the sign, perhaps with the face of any central person in your story alongside it.

And remember, whenever photographing a thing – a place or an object – to try to get a person into the shot. A picture to accompany a restaurant review that shows an empty restaurant makes a very dull picture. If you are on a B2B magazine there is no getting away from the need for lots of product shots, but try to use people whenever you can.

## *Learn the rule of thirds*

If we are to produce professional photographs we need to plan their composition carefully. Photographers follow what they call the **rule of thirds**. To understand it, picture your photo divided with three lines horizontally and another three vertically. This gives a grid of nine parts to the picture. For compositions to look professional, the key elements in the photograph should correspond to one of four intersections of those horizontal and vertical lines. That means we don't put the main subject of our picture bang in the middle, we offset it to one side.

## *Shoot vertical and horizontal versions of each image*

Give yourself some flexibility – if you have upright and landscape versions of all your pictures, then you won't end up with a photograph that doesn't fit the space you have for it.

## *Shoot action*

Posed pictures often look dull and stilted. Instead, try to photograph people while they are doing something, so the picture looks more natural. If you are photographing a footballer, have them keeping the ball in the air. If you photograph a teacher, have them sitting by a pupil helping them with something.

## *Be careful about the background*

That means avoiding having something odd or distracting behind your subject. Will that lamppost look like it is growing out of their head? Will that shrub make them look like they have a massive afro? Is there a pile of rubbish behind them?

3A4

## Editing pictures

There is plenty of choice of photo-editing software. The more sophisticated and expensive programs include Adobe, which you will probably have access to if you are on a journalism course. Then there are the free systems you get as part of your PC or Mac. Free systems are also available online, such as snipshot.com.

Whatever system you use, there are some fundamentals to remember:

- Edit a copy of each photo, not the original
- Crop the pictures
- Decide if there is any wasted space, or if the composition can be improved. Maybe you need to zoom in on one key element, or crop in on one person, and leave another out
- If your photograph is for the web, compress the image.

Compressing means reducing the number of pixels to an appropriate size for the web.

Many content management systems (CMS) automatically compress photos, and blogging software resizes them automatically as well.

### *Compressing files in Microsoft Picture Manager*

Open the photo.

Here's a photo that I'd like to use for the labyrinths news feature I worked on in Chapter Two. This is unedited.

I want to crop it to get rid of the post and rope in the foreground, so I open it and click on **Save as** to make a copy to work on, preserving the original.

An option called **Autocorrect** allows me to automatically adjust the colour and brightness of the picture.

Now I click on **Crop** and black bars appear around the picture. As I just want to cut a slice off the bottom of the picture I click on the black bar at bottom centre and move it up. When I'm happy with the area to be cropped I click again on **OK**, and my picture is cropped.

Here it is cropped:

Then I click on **Back to edit** and find that some further options appear in the right-hand side of my picture. One is **Resize**, the other is **Compress**.

First I resize. I have the option of inserting the pixel dimensions I want the picture reduced to, or I can go for one of the automated options. I choose **Web large**.

Here it is resized:

Finally I compress. Again, I go for an automated option, and click to compress for the web.

Here it is compressed:

Doing this has reduced the size of my picture considerably.

## *Editing in iPhoto on a Mac*

Select a photo by double clicking on it. There will be a group of tools at the bottom of the screen (if there aren't click **Edit** and they will appear). To crop, select the crop button and a border will appear. You can drag the sides, top or bottom in to remove the area you don't want. Hit **return** or **enter** when you are satisfied.

To resize and compress the image, choose **Export** from the **File** menu and select **Scale images no larger than** and give the size you want in pixels. Then click **Export** and save the edited image.

**on the website**

- See video tutorials in using both Microsoft Picture Manager and Apple iPhoto.

## *Publishing the picture on Webs*

Open the story file you want to add an image to. Click on the **image** icon in **commands** area in the top left-hand of the screen. Locate the image and it will be uploaded into the file you have open. Once it is there you can move it around by using the **cut** and **paste** commands. The text commands enable you to position the picture with text running to its left or its right, or you can avoid what is known as a wrap of text and your words will begin beneath the image.

3A5

## Telling stories through picture galleries and slide shows

Very often, in a print publication, the restriction on space means we use just one or two pictures to illustrate a story. We have no such restriction online. Indeed, if a story warrants it, we can include a dozen pictures or more. We don't have to have all those pictures present on our story screen either. Instead, we can arrange them in one of two related ways.

### *A picture gallery*

A picture gallery is a sequence of pictures. Often we have a separate, dedicated template for galleries, and – depending on what our content management system lets us do – it can either be included as an element of the main story screen or be linked to from that screen.

One form of picture gallery template presents one picture in a large format and the rest in a series of thumbnails. If the viewer flicks on one of the thumbnails, it appears in the main picture window, replacing the image that was there before. The viewer can click on any image they are interested in to see it enlarged.

### *A slide show*

A slide show differs from a picture gallery in that it is automated. The images follow each other automatically, in a sequence, once the viewer has clicked on either the link to the slide show or the opening image.

Using a sequence of pictures has two main purposes. One is that it enables us to tell a story as it unfolded – the progress of a fire or a flood, for example. Also, it gives us the opportunity to play to one of the web's great strengths: we can satisfy a (perhaps small) audience that has a deep level of interest in a particular story.

### *Captioning*

Good captions are important. Not quite as important as good headlines, but they still deserve some effort. A caption is another way of "selling" a story to a reader. Readers often look at pictures as they scan the opening of a story, and an interesting picture can be one of the key triggers to reading that story. A caption can help as well, if it tells the scanner something that appeals to them.

Too often, captions really don't say anything very much. Even a caption on a mug shot can say more than the name of the person pictured. If the person is a murder victim, and even if we only have very little space for our caption, saying: **Murdered: John Smith** or **Victim: John Smith** is better than giving just their name because the reader now knows their context within the story. Incidentally, we could switch the captions around so the person's name comes first. And if the words 'murdered' and 'victim' are already in our head and sell we can go for another key word. Perhaps the murder victim was strangled. In which case **John Smith: strangled**.

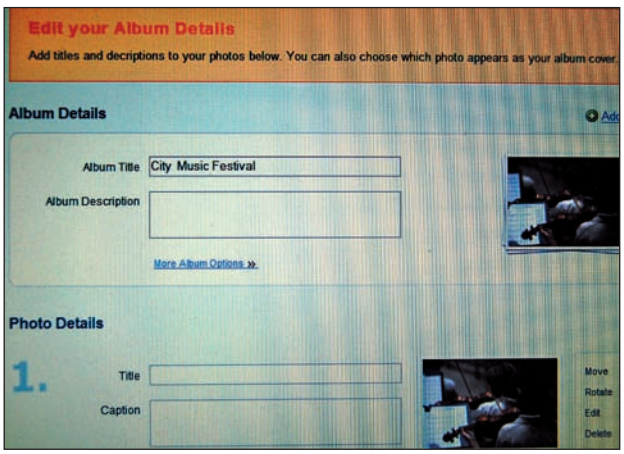
## *Creating a picture gallery and slide show on Webs*

With Webs, you create both at the same time. The user can choose whether to click through the pictures one by one, in a gallery, or automate the process by choosing to watch them in an automated slide show. Click on **edit your site** to begin, and then click the **Photographs** button. The interface that comes up asks you to give your gallery a title and then has you select the pictures from your computer that you want to upload.

The example I'm working with is a range of pictures from an event I've invented and called the City Music Festival. Once the pictures have uploaded, click on **submit** and you'll find your pictures loaded into one screen with text boxes for a general introduction to the gallery, and for individual titles and captions for each of the pictures.

We don't have to put a lot of detail in our captions if we don't want to – particularly if we are linking the slide show or gallery to a text story that has a lot of detail in it. But we can also make our picture package self-contained, by adding an explanation of what the user will see in the opening screen, together with the picture we have selected as the opening one and the heading we have given the gallery.

Each picture appears with the options alongside it that you see on the first one on the screen grab here:



We need to organise the pictures to best tell the story of the music festival. I'm choosing for my cover pic one of a young guitarist jumping into the air that was taken during a break in performances. He is Alex Cowan and his group Freezin' won the Battle of the Bands. I've chosen it because it is clear, simple and has movement and impact.

There are two other good pics from the Battle of the Bands which will make a good sequence, but I don't want to open the gallery with these, so I drop them in a sequence a little way down.

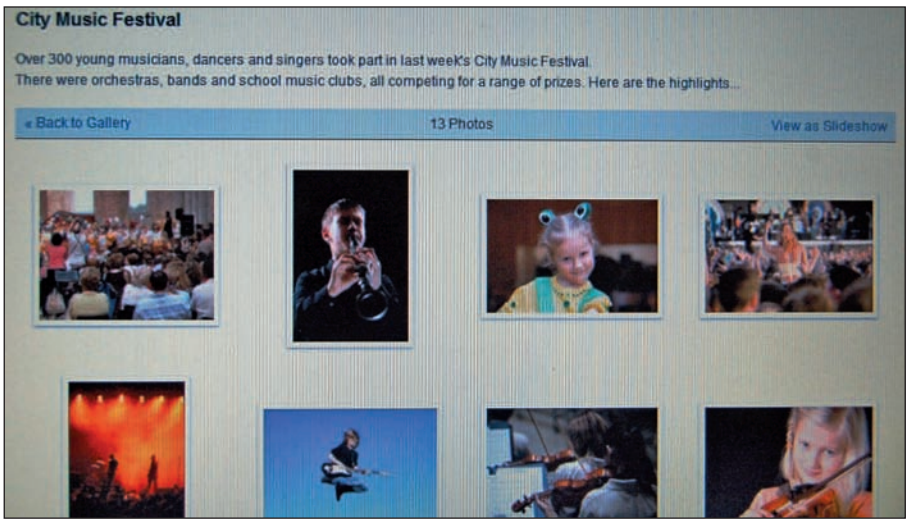
I have two other good picture sequences, one of various aspects of a performance by a song and dance group, and one by a youth orchestra. I run those in short sequences, and add in other additional standalone pictures.

I'm aiming for variety in terms of the sorts of pictures I use, and also in terms of introducing as many aspects of the music festival as I can.

You can give each picture a title, as well as a caption. Titles aren't essential, but informative captions are. They should say who is in the picture and something about how they did in the show.

Once you are happy with your selection and have proofread your words, you can publish it to your website. I've chosen to add a link named **Photo Gallery** to my nav bar, but you could also write a short news story and link the slide show to it. As you get more photo galleries on your website you might want to have them launch from a page at level two in the hierarchy of your site.

Click on the link and the gallery appears like this:


City Music Festival
Over 300 young musicians, dancers and singers took part in last week's City Music Festival.
There were orchestras, bands and school music clubs, all competing for a range of prizes. Here are the highlights...
« Back to Gallery
13 Photos
View as Slideshow

There is an option – **view as a slide show** – when it appears like this:

reewebs
Crowd pleasers
SEE THIS IN 3D
The castle proved a popular venue, and the crowds packed in for this performance by the City Youth Band and Singers
Full Screen

## on the website

- Ask the experts. Look out for masterclasses on photography
- Tell us about the photos on your sites and blog. Send us links to them so we can introduce other readers to what you are doing
- Test your knowledge with an interactive quiz.

3A6

## Exercises and projects

### Exercise 1

Study the pictures in a newspaper and a glossy magazine. Look at how they are composed and cropped. Do the pictures always add to the story?

### Exercise 2

Look at how pictures are used on a number of news websites. How often are they stock pictures that have no direct connection with the story they illustrate?

### Exercise 3

Look at a range of picture galleries and slide shows on websites. How are they introduced in the text? How are they captioned?

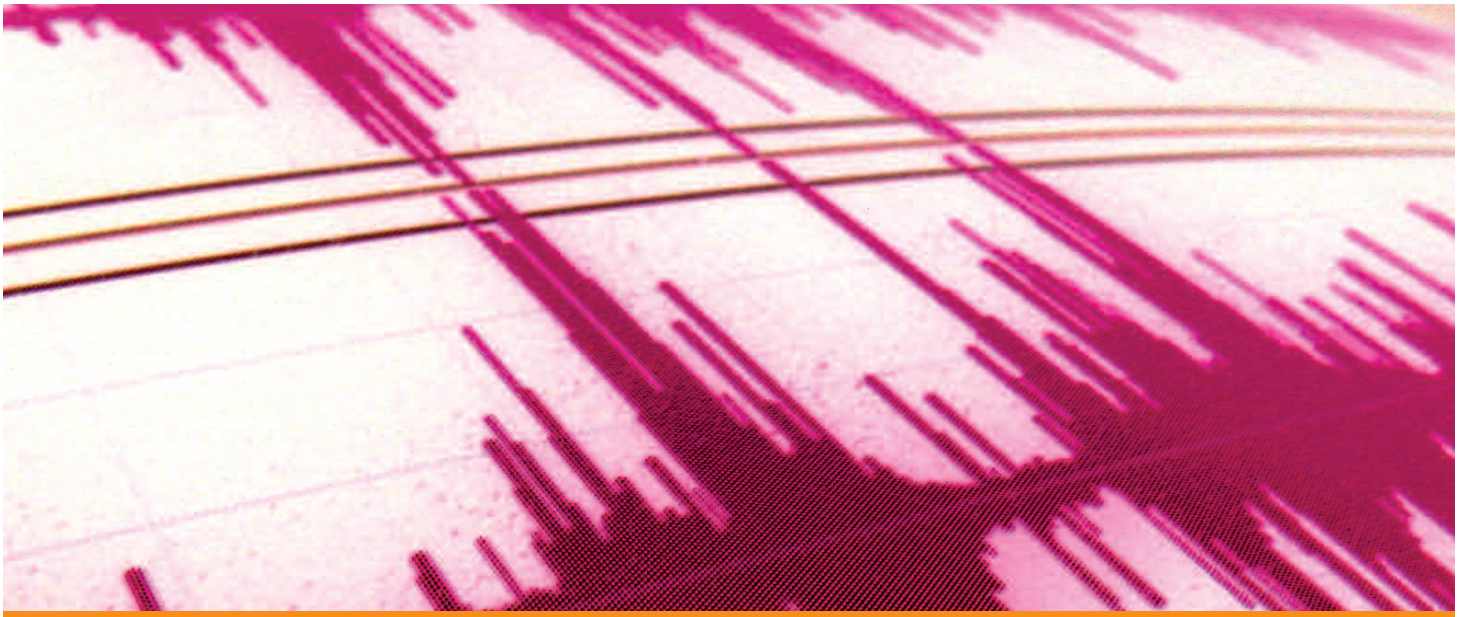
### Projects

1 Take your camera along when you interview someone. Take pictures of them, ranging from simple mug shots to full-length portraits and pictures of them in action – doing their job, their hobby or in any other appropriate context. Pick pictures that would work for a glossy magazine, a newspaper and for a website. Edit, crop and resize them as appropriate. Publish the interview on your website.

2 Attend an event appropriate to the subject matter of your website. Take pictures, as appropriate, of individuals, places and events to illustrate this story effectively. Edit, crop and resize your pictures as appropriate. Publish these illustrated stories on your website.

3 Create a picture gallery or slide show. Attend a major event that is of interest to the audience of one of your websites. Cover the event pictorially so that you have several dozen pictures to choose from. Make sure you have the information you need to write comprehensive captions. Edit this total down to about 15 pictures or so. Organise the pictures so that they tell the story of the event. They don't have to appear chronologically; place them in order of interest and importance – using your news judgement to guide you. Give the gallery a title and write some opening text that introduces the story. Write captions and, if you choose to, give headings to each picture.

   Publish this gallery on your website. Send it to Multimedia Journalism for our experts' comments.



chapter four

# *Audio and podcasting*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

- How to create audio news reports
- How to create podcasts.

We will look at:

- Audio recording equipment and formats
- Recording audio reports and podcasts
- Editing audio reports and podcasts
- Publishing audio.

At the end of the chapter are a range of exercises and projects to enable you to practise what you have learned.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- An interactive quiz to test your understanding of audio recording and editing
- A wide range of examples of audio reports
- Links to video tutorials illustrating the material covered here
- Comment threads on various aspects of audio reporting
- Masterclasses on audio
- Links to further information.

4A1

## Introduction: how audio can be used

Many reporters record their interviews. Recording them for broadcast can be a simple by-product of the reporting process. After all, the recorder is on anyway. You may only be able to use a couple of quotes in your text story, but perhaps there is more from the speaker that could be of interest to readers – particularly those with a deep level of interest in the story.

Likewise with a feature interview. You may well have had an hour with the subject. In a typical 1,000- to 1,500-word feature for a print publication, you probably only have the equivalent of five to 10 minutes of what the subject said. For readers with a keen interest in the person, or the subject, the chance to listen to another five or 10 minutes – or even more – can be very attractive.

### *Audio clips to enhance a text-based story*

So, at its simplest, your audio report might be just a very basically edited addition to your text report. But there is more we can do. Perhaps you have some sound that powerfully illustrates the story you have written. Just as footage from a CCTV camera might offer a powerful visual addition to the story (as we'll see in Chapter Five), a dramatic sound clip might add a powerful audio element.

When Tiger Woods was involved in a mysterious early morning car crash, in which he hit a tree and a fire hydrant, the story became huge. But immediately after the crash, with Tiger and his wife, who was also involved in the incident, refusing to talk, there was a huge unsatisfied interest in the story. One US station obtained the tape of a police interview with witnesses to the accident and ran the full, unedited 17 minutes on its website.

The station, WDBO in central Florida, published this text story together with the audio on its website:

**http://wdbo.com/localnews/2009/12/audio-tiger-woods-neighbor-tal.html**

This link takes you to the audio – you'll have to listen to a short commercial first:

**http://wdbo.com/Player/100491701/**

It's poor quality, but it does have a sense of immediacy. These people saw what happened and are telling it in their own words, being interviewed by the police very shortly after the event.

The audio can't stand alone, because we need the text report to give us the context and background to the story.

## *Using audio clips as part of a video or stills slide show*

Here's a couple of examples from the MSNBC news channel. They use audio as an element in a video report. The first is another emergency call. Here's the text story:

**http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12208992/**

Here's the video report which contains the audio (sorry, you'll have to put up with an advert before you can watch it):

**http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/12204821#12204821**

Here's another MSNBC story, which is about some audio that has come to light that records an airport worker making a call to the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA):

**http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17023604/**

It is significant because his call, enquiring about a plane which John F. Kennedy Jnr was aboard, was made four hours before a search and rescue operation was launched. Kennedy died in the crash.

Again, the audio has not been used as a self-contained element in a story, but has been built into a video report.

Here's the video report containing the audio:

**http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/17023736#17023736**

Here's a different approach to using a powerful audio clip, from the *Hartlepool Mail*. Here's the text story:

**http://www.hartlepoolmail.co.uk/sectionhome.aspx?sectionid=13764**

The story is about the trial of Anne Darwin, whose husband faked his own death as part of an insurance scam.

The husband and wife's confession tapes have been released by the police. The *Hartlepool Mail* has used the audio, but combined it in a package with a slide show of still images. You can find the audio linked to from the text story.

It's always possible to use an important audio clip as the basis for a video report, as we'll see in Chapter Five, but you don't have to do that. You can also use a piece of crucial audio in an audio package. Indeed, any of the reports we have looked at so far could have stood perfectly well without video or stills. It's that approach we are concentrating on in this chapter. We'll look at audio slide shows in Chapter Ten.

## *The audio package*

You will be familiar with the concept of an audio news package if you listen to radio news or features – particularly if you tune in to local radio. Where a reporter has had time to cover a story in some detail, they will record a number of elements and pull them together into a well-crafted report of two or three minutes. Typically, such a report – known as a package – will have an introduction from the reporter, some interviews and some sound that identifies the place in which the recording took place. Such sounds are a crucial element in an audio report and their effective use is vitally important to its success.

Such reports paint pictures with sound – the sounds are there to give the listener an instant understanding of location. Sounds often start a report. If the sound is of a cow mooing and a man saying, "Come on, girl," the listener expects to discover that the report is taking place on a farm.

The voice of the reporter might come in next, explaining where they are, who they are with and what the story is about. If the reporter has said they are with farmer John Mackenzie and we then hear another voice, we will have a clear understanding that this is Mr Mackenzie speaking.

Here are a couple of examples of traditional audio packages. This one is from BBC Radio Stoke (**http://www.bbc.co.uk/stoke/**) and is called Metal Guru. Here's the link to the website; you'll find the audio link on the page:

**http://www.bbc.co.uk/stoke/content/articles/2007/10/13/road_roller_feature.shtml**

## questions

Before you read on, have a listen. Analyse the elements in the report and its structure. Don't read on until you've done that.

It has an introduction, which sets the piece up. It's about a man who kept active in his retirement by making something (we aren't yet told what). The intro ends on the words: "It all started when he bought himself a lathe . . ."

The next sound we hear is the lathe being turned on. Without the word "lathe" in the intro we wouldn't know what the sound was. The interviewee talks over the sound and we can imagine him in his workshop. This background sound was actually recorded separately from the interview, as what is known as a wild track – more about that later. The interviewer's questions have been edited out so we get a very natural, uninterrupted chat from the subject. At points the wild track changes, from the lathe turning to a file being used, for example.

We learn he is actually making a quarter-scale model of a steam engine. We have had to listen for a little while to get that information, but the device works because we are intrigued to discover what exactly it is that this man has taken years creating.

This package comes not from a traditional radio journalist but from the *Guardian* reporter Martin Wainwright, who for much of his career reported for them only in print. But now, as this clip shows, when he covers a story such as that of serious flooding in Cockermouth, Cumbria, he also creates an audio report. It's simpler than the last one, but still involves the elements of interview, location and reporter's commentary:

**http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/audio/2009/nov/23/flood-cumbria-clearup**

## *Podcasts – and RSS feeds*

Then there is the podcast. But what is a podcast, and does it differ from a bog-standard bit of audio or an audio package? In a word, yes. But not necessarily in terms of content. Because, while a podcast might contain all the elements of an audio package, and be as slickly produced, it is different in one key way: how it is distributed.

Podcasts are not just available on a website or blog, although you will be able to access them that way. They are also available independently of your main publishing platform. BBC Radio

4's *Today* programme has a Best of Today podcast that you can subscribe to by clicking a link on their website:

**http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/default.stm**

Here's how that works. Web users can subscribe to podcasts through an RSS feed. You will have seen the little orange logo denoting an RSS feed on many websites. It invites you to subscribe to a feed from that site – or a particular section of the site. To subscribe you need to have signed up to what is known as a feed reader.

Say you have a Google account. Click on any RSS logo and a screen comes up asking if you want the feed added to your Google home page or Google reader. Either way, once you have subscribed to that feed, any time its producer adds new content you will find that content listed when you next look at your RSS reader. That content can be text or audio.

This facility is very helpful for journalists who need to keep up to date with specific subjects. You don't have to search individually on the many websites you need to monitor. The updates come to you, via your RSS feeds. Likewise, if you have your own feed, listeners who subscribe to it get an update each time you post a new podcast. So your feed is the channel through which you publish your podcasts.

This means we can distribute our content independently of our websites or blogs. Of course, you could put every bit of audio you produce on an RSS feed, but that would be a bad idea if the audio doesn't work independently of the text that it accompanies.

Podcasts have no fixed format, and there are many styles of podcast. They might be just two or more people chatting. Such pods are often very informal, perhaps shambolic. Or they might be audio packages of the type we have discussed above. Alternatively, they might be carefully produced programmes of the standard of – and indistinguishable from – half-hour radio shows.

Here are some examples.

### *An unscripted chat podcast*

Let's listen to a podcast to be found on the website of *The Word* magazine.

**on the website**

- **Find a link to it on the web version of this chapter. Have a listen.**

It is a very relaxed, unscripted chat about music.

This is how its creator, David Hepworth, described it in the *Guardian*:

Every Monday afternoon Mark Ellen and I gather with a couple of contributors in a spare room at our office to record the Word podcast, a 40-minute bull session in which we chew over a bunch of rockular topics in the most haphazard fashion. We happen to have among the team a disproportionate number of people with extensive broadcasting experience. Or just experience of talking. In the podcast medium they're free to do something that they can't do anywhere else, which is dilate on their favourite topics for an audience prepared to give them any amount of slack. It's an inch away from a complete shambles. It's also one of the most liberating things I've ever done.

(Guardian, 19 November 2007)

## questions

Have a listen. What do you think of it? Does it work for you? Don't read on until you have decided. Clearly, such a podcast is not like a mainstream radio show. It won't work for many people. Listeners really have to be on the right wavelength to appreciate it. But notice that David Hepworth says it is liberating. Podcasts can be a lot of fun. They free you from the constraints of formal, objective reporting. You can sound off, have a laugh, rave about your pet love or rant about your pet hate. Listeners know podcasts are different from our formal work – they are us with our feet up. A podcast of you and some friends chatting like this would work for listeners who are on your wavelength – just as long as you have something to say!

*A radio-style package podcast*

Here is an example of a podcast that uses the format of a radio show, with a presenter introducing a short package put together by a reporter. The headline on the text link to it reads:

**Abbas Jazzi 16 lives for Football . . .**

This link takes you to the text introduction to it:

**http://www.unicef.org/football/index_intro_33826.html**

Click on the audio link for the podcast.

Unicef is the United Nations' Children's Fund. The podcasts on what it calls Unicef Radio are designed to illustrate the work that the organisation does; to bring it to life and to show individuals who have been helped.

## questions

What are this podcast's strengths and weaknesses? Don't read on until you have decided.

It could be a lot more interesting than it is. Click on the link and you get not one but two introductions to the item – the first from some sort of presenter, the second from the journalist. It is some time before you get to the boy and the football. And where's the passion? The report could have started with the sound of him playing football, perhaps the scuff of a football on the ground, the pants, grunts and scuffling feet of the players, followed by them yelling in joy at a goal. Opening with such audio would have put the listener in a place and with a person. Once the scene is established, the reporter could then come in. You don't need the presenter at all because the text link does their job quite adequately.

### *The polished, radio-show-style podcast*

The *Guardian* runs a range of highly professional podcasts. The link here is to an episode of one called Media Talk. Here's the link to the text file; you'll find the podcast links at the bottom:

**http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/organgrinder/2007/may/18/mediatalkforfridaymay18**

## questions

What do you think of it? Don't read on until you have decided.

This podcast is pretty much up to the quality of a radio show, give or take a bit of dodgy audio. It is pretty serious, but might be just the thing to load on to your iPod or MP3 player to listen to on the way to work.

Such a podcast is very resource-intensive. It has a presenter, the footage must be edited, guests must be coordinated. Such programming takes time and resources.

### *Why you should podcast*

You should be creating regular podcasts as part of your development as a multimedia journalist. Be disciplined. Whether your podcast is on a website – and several people may be contributing to it – or on your blog and done by you alone, publish regularly. That way listeners know when to expect more from you and – if you get good at it – will look out for your new posts.

If you are blogging about music, for example, you can do a weekly gig guide podcast. If you blog about movies, your podcast could be a review of the week's releases. If you get one or two other people together you can turn your podcast into a lively discussion along the lines of a radio feature or short programme. Sports podcasters can offer a weekly preview of the big game, and a post-match analysis.

If you are specialising in a fast-moving area of journalism – politics, the City or any of the beats that a newspaper or B2B magazine journalist has to follow – you might do a daily podcast.

4A2

## Audio recording equipment and formats

So that's a taster of what can be done; here's how to get started.

### *Audio formats*

You need to know a bit about digital file formats right at the outset. Audio that is available on a website will have been compressed so that it downloads faster.

If you have an MP3 player it is called that because the files on it have been compressed in the MP3 format. Other compressed formats include:

- WMA, used in Windows Media
- Real, used by the Real Audio brand
- MPEG-4, used by the Quicktime brand
- MPEG-4 AAC, used by iTunes.

Then there are uncompressed formats which are not found on websites:

- WAV, which is pronounced wave
- AIFF, which is Apple's standard format.

We are going to stick with the MP3 format because it is so universal – almost any computer can play an MP3 file, and so can programs such as iTunes, Real Player and Windows Media Player. But try to play a file in one of these formats on one of the others and you will have a problem.

## *Recording equipment*

To record professional audio you need a good digital recorder. They come in all shapes, sizes and costs.

**on the website**

- **Find up-to-the-minute buyers' guides.**

Here are the essentials you need to take into account when choosing – at whatever price you pay.

### *Is it easy to use?*

One-touch recording is best.

### *How much recording time does it have?*

Recorders with 20 or 30 hours may seem excessive, but if you only have an hour or two it is surprising how quickly the memory fills up. If the machine has a slot for a memory card you are restricted only by the capacity of the card and by how many of them you have.

### *What digital file format does it use, and is that format compatible with your computer?*

MP3 is best, because you can edit it on any system. If the recorder uses Windows Media and you work on a Mac, you'll need a file converter to switch it to MP3 or another format that is compatible with Mac software.

### *Does it have a USB port?*

It needs one, so that you can easily plug it into your computer and transfer files from it.

*Does it have mic and headphone input points?*

It must have both. You need an external mic to focus on the sound you want – such as a person talking – and screen out general background noise. You need headphones to listen in to your recording and make sure the quality is good. Particularly before an interview, checking that sound levels are neither too high nor too low is very important.

Some people like to keep headphones on while they record, others don't. When recording in a noisy place, headphones help you make sure your subject can be heard, and if you are recording on the street and a motorbike shoots past, you know whether your speaker was drowned out or not.

An external mic will vastly improve the quality of your recording, and good sound is the key to a good audio report. Without it the listener is not going to bother.

You can either get a standard mic with a cord that attaches it to the recorder, or a wireless or lavalier mic. A standard mic is useful if you are interviewing more than one person, as you can direct it to a given speaker, and also towards yourself when you want to ask a question. It's also good for getting natural sound – actuality – to add a flavour of where your interview is taking place and what is going on.

A wireless mic is useful if you want to record one person and it is hard to keep close to them at all times. For example, if you mic up a runner in a race, or someone moving through a crowd and describing what they are seeing. Wireless mics come in two parts. There is a battery pack and a small mic that you clip to your subject's clothes so that their voice can be heard clearly. This transmits to a second, base unit that receives the sound. You attach this to your recorder.

*Two examples of good equipment*

If you are lucky enough to have £500 or so an Edirol R09 by Roland with an Auto Technica AT804 mic makes a very effective combination. You'll also need headphones of some kind, though a simple earpiece from an MP3 player or phone will do.

A cheaper recommended package (at about £220 at the time of writing) consists of an Olympus WS-300M 256 MB Digital Voice Recorder, plus an Electrovoice 635AB microphone.

## *What if you don't have a digital recorder?*

If your camera phone has the facility to also record sound, that will do while you are learning the basics. And you can always record sound and vision on your camera phone – or video camera if you have one – and discard the vision track when you come to edit.

However . . . **good sound is vital.**

You can't create good audio reports if the sound quality of your recordings is poor. So, while you can use low-quality audio to practise interviewing, editing and uploading to your

editing software, you really need decent equipment to create good reports that you can be proud of.

4A3

## Recording audio reports and podcasts

When you are worrying about getting someone to talk to you at all, thinking of also getting them on audio might seem too much to think about. In fact, recording audio when you go about your everyday reporting work becomes second nature once you have done it a few times.

Of course, not all reports need audio. A standard news story in which you have a couple of pars of quotes from three people probably doesn't benefit from it, but it can add to many other everyday stories. Take a vox pop, for example. If you record the people who stop to answer your questions, their comments can be edited into a lively audio track. If they say funny things, the humour will come across much better in audio. If an interview is very emotional, the emotion will be fully felt in a sound report.

### *Record somewhere quiet*

When you are conducting your interviews, you need to be keenly aware of sounds that will become distracting when broadcast. For example, a ticking clock might not bother you in normal circumstances, but if it comes out on your recording it can become intrusive. A whirring fan is another distraction. Turn such appliances off, or move your subject somewhere else.

### *The importance of natural sound*

Natural sounds give a sense of place. Having your interviewer speaking, or you describing a scene, is one thing. But good natural sound effects will give the listener a much stronger sense of being in the place.

You might be tempted to simply record your interview close to the source of natural sound.

## questions

So, for example, if you are interviewing a man who went over a waterfall in a barrel, why not interview him with the sound of rushing water behind him? Think about that before you read on.

You could do that, but the danger is that you won't have a good balance between his voice and the sound of the water. The background – natural – sound may be too loud for the speaker to be heard properly. You've probably heard interviews conducted by busy roads. Even if they are meant to illustrate how horribly noisy the traffic is, your listener does have to be able to hear what is said.

If you record your interview somewhere quiet, and the natural sounds separately, you can run both audio tracks simultaneously when you come to edit, and adjust the balance so background does not drown out foreground.

You might not want much natural sound at all, but it is always worth getting a few minutes of it. Audio obtained in this way is known as wild track. Perhaps you just want some natural sound to open your audio. If you are on a farm, the sound of cows mooing at the start of an audio report immediately tells the listener where you are.

Record natural sound – wild track – in uninterrupted 20-second segments. Record a minute or two for a short report. That ensures you have enough wild track to drop into your report.

### *How to conduct your interview*

There are three approaches to conducting an audio interview.

The first is to do your initial interviewing without recording it. Once you have a clear idea of the story you can switch to record mode and conduct a formal, structured interview. This approach can be advantageous if you only want a short piece of audio from an interview. You avoid recording a lot of material you can't use. The potential drawback is that spontaneity is lost. Your interviewee either doesn't give as good an answer the second time or refuses to repeat something they now realise they were unwise to say.

The second approach is to begin recording straightaway. If you do this you need to have a clear structure to your questioning worked out. You can't interrupt and say, "Sorry, when did this happen?" or "Can you spell that?" If you are used to interviewing for print it can be hard to get out of the habit of butting in, or of simply murmuring agreement or other suitable responses to what you are being told. And you really want to ask your questions pretty much in the order you expect to run the answers you get, or you will have a big editing job on your hands.

The best approach is a sort of halfway house. With this, you ask a few preliminary questions to get the basics, but don't put your key questions. Then you start recording and put the key questions.

## *How to phrase your questions*

There are what are known as closed questions and open questions. An example of a closed question is: "Do you think the condition of the estate is a disgrace?" Here is an open version of the same question: "How would you describe the condition of the estate?"

**questions**

Which is best? Don't read on until you have decided.

The open question is best. The closed question risks a one-word, yes or no answer.

If you are conducting a vox pop, make sure you ask everyone the same question. If you do you can easily edit the question out of all but the first interview and run the answers on. If you need to ask a second question, ask it of everybody and you can then splice these answers together to form the second part of the interview. For example:

First question: "What do you think about the condition of the estate?"

A string of answers follows.

Second question: "What do you think the housing association should do about it?"

A second string of answers follows.

## *What order should you ask your questions in?*

If the interview is non-controversial, asking questions in the order you expect to broadcast the answers in is the best approach. However, if you are interviewing a reluctant interviewee, or have some difficult questions to ask, it is often best to keep those difficult questions back until towards the end of the interview.

The reasoning here is that we want to get as much on tape as we can. If there is a danger that certain questions will provoke the interviewee to terminate the interview, then we ask the most innocuous questions first, gradually building up to the trickiest ones.

That's when we are recording. If the interview is going out live then we should get straight to the point and ask the key question first, however awkward it is.

## How to plan your interview

Know what you want to get out of it. Know what your goal is. Have a focus. Have clear open questions. Get straight to the point. If you have a list of questions you need to ask, be careful not to stick religiously to them. You must listen to the answers and respond, pick the interviewee up on things. Don't ignore unexpected but interesting things that are thrown up in the answers you get. Follow them up. Make the interview a conversation.

And remember that you only want two or three minutes at most. That's very little time, and only allows you to ask a handful of questions. You have much less time to conduct the interview than you would have for a text-based piece, and you will publish far fewer words from your interviewee.

## Before you begin

Tell your subject how long the interview will take. If you want them to begin their answer by telling you their name or other details, make that clear. Get levels from them. A good recording level oscillates between half and two-thirds up the range. Check that your recording equipment is working by recording them telling you, for example, what they had for breakfast, and playing that back through your headphones to confirm all is well.

As you interview, keep eye contact, nod to encourage, don't speak.

When you are finished, check you have a usable recording. If you don't, you'll have to apologise humbly and ask to go again.

## Creating a podcast

There are only a few main elements to audio – a vox pop, an interview, a discussion and a voice piece or audio diary. Any of those elements can occur in any piece of audio. Podcasts can also include one or more of them.

Podcasters often concentrate on voice pieces or audio diaries. Many podcasts are just the subject talking, others are chat sessions. Podcasts are often less formal than more traditionally journalistic audio. The challenge for us as podcasting journalists is to bring high journalistic standards to our podcasts in terms of accuracy, fairness and telling a good story while retaining that informal web-friendly, personal style.

More ambitious podcasts with high journalistic standards may well be very personal in that the podcaster will place themselves in the item and take a personal slant on whatever issue they want to cover. But they can also include the elements we find in general audio reports – an interview or discussion, and maybe a vox pop too. The package will be cleanly put together, with a strong narrative drive, good logical links between the items and a clear beginning, middle and end.

The podcast's immediacy can be boosted – like any audio report – with appropriate sound effects. So recording wild track is just as important for a podcast as for other audio.

We needn't get hung up with definitions here. A podcast and an audio package can be identical in subject and content. The only actual difference between a podcast and other audio, as we said earlier on, is in the way the podcast is distributed and accessed.

## *Creating a podcast or package*

- Begin with your topic and a plan
- What is the podcast/package about?
- What do you want to achieve?
- Simple is good.

**on the website**

- **Find a guide to great podcasts.**

Here are a couple of simple ideas for podcasts:

- Can you create a meal for a family of four by spending £1?
- Do the images on women's magazines of perfect figures make women want to have cosmetic surgery?

Both ideas need a starting point.

The £1 idea might start with the podcaster in a market, with market sounds, explaining what the quest is.

The second might begin in front of a rack of women's magazines in a newsagent's.

In each case the podcaster can say, over a background of relevant sound, why they are where they are and what they are setting out to achieve. In each case you could talk to some people, vox pop style.

With the market idea, market stallholders might be asked: "What can you sell me for a pound to feed my family?"

In the cosmetic surgery story, the podcaster could ask women looking at the mags what they think of the images. Are they ever tempted to have something done?

The podcaster might then move to something of an audio diary or voice piece. They might take a very personal approach to the story. With the cosmetic surgery idea they might go for some consultations.

Depending on where the story is leading, the podcast/package might then move to an interview with an expert of some kind.

In the cosmetic surgery one, a surgeon, commentator or other authoritative figure might be asked to comment on the pressures women may feel to have surgery or how liberating it is to tackle imperfections.

With the market idea, perhaps the podcaster found that it would cost a good bit more to feed a family. If they walked past a café offering a very cheap all-you-can-eat deal they might interview the owner and ask: "Could I feed my family as cheaply as this at home?"

The audio will benefit from a neat conclusion. That might mean another voice piece from the podcaster to sum up or round off.

The structure is flexible, and the elements might vary depending on how the story unfolds.

**on the website**

- Find links to further advice on creating good audio reports and podcasts.

4A4

## Editing audio reports and podcasts

You need software to do that. You can do it in iMovies or Windows Movie Maker. Alternatively you can use dedicated software. The industry leader is probably Adobe Audition. For this chapter, we are going to use a free service called Audacity. You can download it here:

**http://audacity.sourceforge.net/download/windows**

**on the website**

- Find the links you need to download Audacity and further links to text and video tutorials on how to use it.

## *How to import audio . . . or record a podcast*

If you have recorded material that you want to edit and publish, then first you need to bring the file you want to edit into Audacity. Click on the **Import** button to do that.

If you are recording a podcast direct to your computer, then all you have to do is plug in your mic, check levels and set Audacity to record by pushing the **big red button**.

Try talking and see how it goes. If you are particularly fluent or confident – and have a clear idea of what you want your podcast to be about – then you may be able to run through it in one flawless take. That's unlikely. You will probably want to edit out some "ums" and "ahs", or fluffs and false starts.

So, whether you have imported audio or just recorded it anew, the next step is to . . .

## *Listen to it through*

Unless your audio is very simple, you will probably have several clips that you intend to combine into one coherent package or podcast. For now, listen to each individually. As you listen, make a note of points you want to keep, by jotting down the stop and start points on the timeline, and ones you want to lose. You can return to these points later.

The **space bar** is very useful – hit it once and your audio plays, hit it again and it stops. Hit it a third time and it plays once more from the previous starting point, so you can focus on one short piece of audio that you want to edit.

You will see the peaks and troughs of your audio. This visual measure is very useful. You can see the flat bits that denote silence, which helps you identify where your questions and answers begin and end.

## *Cut out the bits you don't want*

As you play you will find bits you want to cut out. To delete it's just like Windows. You right click at the start of the section that is to go, and drag across to define it. Once the section is defined, hit **delete**. It goes. If you've made a mistake, there is an **undo** button with an arrow just like the one in Windows.

*Splitting clips*

Under the **edit** button you get a range of options including **split**. Have the cursor where you want to divide your clip and click on split.

*The zoom tool*

If it's hard to see exactly where to make a cut or split, use the **zoom** tool – the magnifying glass top left – to zoom in so you can see exactly where to make your edit.

## *Adjust the levels of your audio*

If you have sections of your audio where the volume is either too high or too low, define it, and click on the **Effects** button. From the drop-down menu select **amplify**. The interface that comes up has a value for how much your audio level will be boosted. Try it and see how it works. If it is too much, or not enough, you can type your own value in the box. If you want to reduce the sound level, put a **minus sign** in front of the value you type there.

## *Put your clips in order*

Once each clip is trimmed and tidied up, decide the order in which they should appear in your package or podcast. So open a new project and give it a name. You should import your clips into your project file and then you can either cut and paste your clips in the right order on the same track or you can put them on different tracks. If you do that you'll need to use the **timeshift** tool – the two-headed arrow in the panel of tools top left – to move them around so that they do not play all at the same time, but come in one after the other. This can get complicated, but the advantage is that you can overlap two clips and fade out the end of one as you fade in the start of the other. That's one way of getting a neat transition between clips.

Alternatively, and more simply, cut and paste each clip on the same track in order. You can use the **timeshift** tool to get them positioned correctly. You can leave a gap between clips if you like.

You will need to use a second track to place audio that fills those gaps. That audio might be from your wild track, or it could be music, if appropriate. You can fade the wild track or music up and down to fill the gaps.

The **timeshift** tool enables you to move elements of audio on different tracks around. So, if you have theme music for your podcast to introduce it and play it out, import it to the second audio track and move the central, main section of the podcast along so that it begins just as the theme music is ending, and vice versa at the end. You can use the cross fade in and cross fade out options under the **Effects** button to do that.

When you are done, save your project. Under the **File** button select **Save project as** and give it a name. If this is the first in a regular podcast, number or date it.



4A5

## Publishing audio

To make your file readable in other applications, you will have to export it from Audacity. Simply saving it won't do. You can make your audio into an MP3 file reader to be published online by going to the **File** tab and selecting **Export as MP3**. Save it as WAV and it will be enormous and take an age to download.

You will be prompted to download something called the **Lame encoder** in order to complete the publishing process.

### *How to set up an RSS feed*

You need to do this to get your podcast live. You can publish to your blog, but you still do so through an RSS feed.

Users can listen to your audio on web or blog, but they can also subscribe to your audio channel, through a reader, which means that each time you publish a new audio file, they get an alert to say you have done so.

There are various publishing tools. There is Liberated Syndication, **www.libsyn.com**, which costs $5 a month. There are free alternatives, including Podcast Generator, Poderator or Podbean.

They all ask you to register, after which you can upload your podcast from your computer to them. They will generate an RSS feed address for you. Tell your users what that is and they can subscribe to your podcasts.

**on the website**

- **Find links for good publishing tools and a video tutorial from Blogger on how to publish audio on that site.**

## Now that you have completed the chapter . . .

**on the website**

- Take the interactive quiz to find out how much you have remembered.

4A6

## Exercises and projects

### Exercise 1

Record your voice. You can do it straight to Audacity on your computer if you have a plug-in mic, just to give yourself something to work with. Perhaps read out several stories from a news website. Record two minutes, then edit it down to one minute. Use this as an exercise to get used to Audacity and to see how you sound.

### Exercise 2

Monitor the audio on websites of two publications from any two of the following categories: a local newspaper, a B2B magazine, a general consumer magazine and a national newspaper.

What format does it follow? How well is it produced? Are there ways you think it could be improved?

### Exercise 3

Monitor the audio and podcasts on the website of a broadcaster such as the BBC. Choose the website of a local radio station and of a network programme that you enjoy or which is relevant to your websites and podcasts.

Again, consider these questions: what format does it follow? How well is it produced? Are there ways you think it could be improved? In addition, compare the quality of this audio with that of the audio you have found on the sites you are covering for Exercise 2. Is the quality better from the broadcaster? If it is, identify why.

What can we learn from broadcast journalists about the art of audio reporting and podcasting?

## Projects

1 Choose a current news story that is relevant to your website or blog and go out and conduct a vox pop. Record an introduction to the piece in which you tell the listener what you are trying to find out. Ask six people one clear, concise and open question. Follow up as necessary with additional questions. If necessary, record a closing voice piece. Record some wild track. Edit the package to no more than two minutes, using Audacity or another audio editing program.

   Write a news story that introduces the vox pop for your Webs site, add a link from it to the audio you have created and publish.

2 Conduct an interview of no more than four minutes' duration with a person involved in a current news story that is relevant to your website. Record any additional material you need – such as an introduction, conclusion or any necessary links between points in your subject's answers.

   Edit it down to no more than two minutes and publish it on your website.

3 Record a four-minute package. It should include these elements:

   - an intro from you
   - a vox pop
   - an interview.

   Record some wild track and any other elements to complete the package, such as introductions or links from you and possibly a concluding statement.

4 Come up with the subject for a podcast that would fit into your blog. Have a clear idea of your subject matter. Try to get colleagues, friends or other enthusiasts for your chosen subject to take part. See yourself as the anchor or chairperson for the discussion that takes place. Record a new episode of the podcast each week. Publish each edition via a feed and place it on your Blogger or other blog.

chapter five

# *Video*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

- The hardware and software needed to create video reports
- How to film a wide range of video reports
- Telling a story through moving pictures
- Writing to pictures
- Presentation skills
- Editing video to create effective packages
- Publishing video on a website and blog
- Streaming live video reports to your blog and website.

At the end of the chapter are a range ofexercises and projects to enable you to practise what you have learned.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- Updates on latest best practice
- A wide range of videos illustrating the material covered here
- Comment threads on various aspects of filming and editing
- Masterclasses on video reporting
- Expert appraisal of your submitted videos
- An interactive quiz to test your knowledge
- A wealth of links to further information.

5A1

## Introduction

Online video reports come in many forms, from the very simple to the highly ambitious. The simplest could be a clip from a CCTV camera.

A more advanced video report would be what is known as a package – a combination of clips of people, places and events that tell a story primarily through moving images. The reporter will have shaped this package, and may well have added a voice-over to tie it together. They may have done a piece to camera as part of the report.

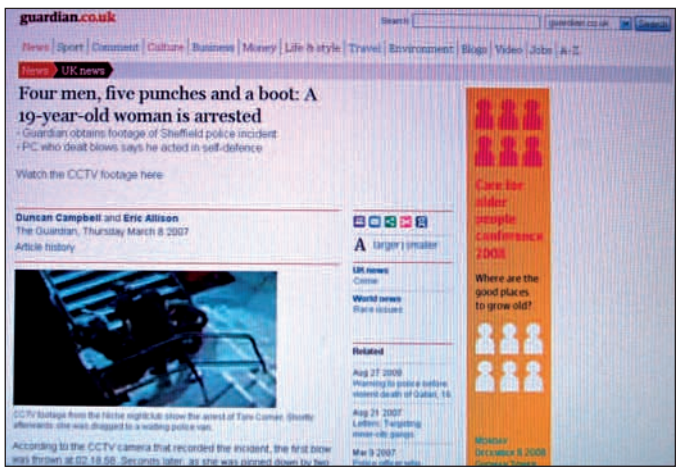
The most complex format is a full online news bulletin presented by a newsreader who introduces a series of individual video reports. Some of those reports may be fairly complex packages in themselves; others may be simple video clips over which they talk.

We are going to look at the full range of what is done. In this chapter we will learn to create the more straightforward video reports. In Chapters Eleven and Sixteen we'll work on the more complex ones. First, to whet your appetite, here are some examples of the various types of video that we can produce.

In order to show you what we mean, and to see the examples we will cover, you will need to have the online version of this chapter open in your browser as you read.

### *A video clip and text-plus reporting*

The simplest video report is really just a video element of a text report. This is often called a text-plus report. Here is an example:


guardian.co.uk
Four men, five punches and a boot: A 19-year-old woman is arrested
Guardian obtains footage of Sheffield police incident
PC who dealt blows says he acted in self-defence
Watch the CCTV footage here
Duncan Campbell and Eric Allison
The Guardian, Thursday March 8 2007
Article history

Here's the link to this report:

**http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2007/mar/08/race.ukcrime1**

And to that clip:

**http://www.guardian.co.uk/video/page/0,,2028548,00.html**

The video is crucial to this report, as it shows the arrest of a young woman involving a number of police officers and a high level of violence. It adds greatly to the text report that accompanies it, which goes into detail on the claims and counter-claims about what the video is said to show.

Without the video the key opportunity for the reader to see the evidence and draw their own conclusions on what is happening would be lost.

There are other ways of handling such material. It could be used as one element in a video package.

## questions

What elements do you think you'd need to make a short but comprehensive video package built around this CCTV footage? Take a look at that report for ideas. Don't worry if you are unsure. We'll cover the elements of a video package in detail later in this chapter. For now, just use your instinct, and think of all the news packages you have watched over the years. Don't read on until you've decided.

For one thing you would want to talk to the victim, Toni Comer. We learn from the text report that she doesn't remember the incident, and that she is an epileptic. She admits that she had been drinking that night, and became aggressive. Some thorough questioning would be appropriate.

PC Mulhall has issued a statement, and it would be good to get him – or his lawyer – reading it on camera. We want to see him if at all possible, so, failing his agreement to appear on camera, footage of him arriving or leaving court during the case would be useful.

Ruggie Johnson, coordinator of the Monitoring Group North, which obtained the footage, should probably be interviewed.

We could get the police spokeswoman reading the force's statement to camera, and something from the Police Complaints Commission. But these last two are not going to add much visually, and could be covered in the reporter's voice-over.

## questions

By the way, what do you think of the headline on this report? How does it fit with the guidance on using key words that we discussed in Chapter 1? Don't read on until you have reached your conclusions.

This headline is a problem. It contains none of the key words readers are likely to use to find the story. Consequently, although the *Guardian* had the video exclusively, it did not get to the top of Google. Instead, bloggers who covered the story and linked to the *Guardian* report trumped them because they did use key words such as "police", "assault", "woman" and "beaten".

### *A video news package*

A package has a mix of elements within it – one or more interviews, a piece-to-camera segment or two from the reporter, and appropriate video and stills photography of people, locations and events.

Here's an example of a very simple news package from gazzettelive on Teesside:

You'll find this video on the web version of this chapter, but here is the link to it:

**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KA0Mhh5yP0**

## *A video news bulletin*

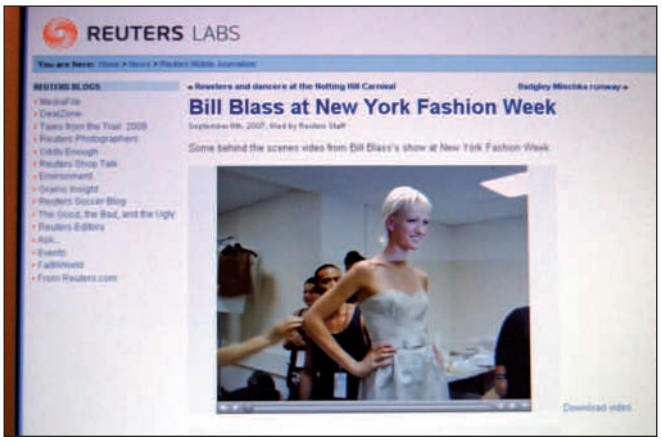
Online news bulletins can follow the format of TV news, with a studio presenter, or news reader, who reads from a script that introduces each item. Generally you'll find five or six items in a two or three minute bulletin. Some of the items have accompanying video. Often, the studio news reader's script is the only soundtrack on some of them, while for others there is an audio track.

The *Newbury Weekly News* has a bulletin on its website each weekday at 1 p.m.

Here is the link:

**http://www.newburytoday.co.uk/News/FlashNewsPlayer.aspx?articleID=107&CategoryID=5**

## *Live footage*



In some ways the most straightforward video is live footage, streamed straight from your camera to a website or blog. Reuters, the international news agency, has been experimenting with a multimedia journalism project called Mojo – short for mobile journalist – with kit that has at its centre a Nokia camera phone. One thing multimedia reporters do is augment their more formal coverage of events with live video. So, for example, while covering the New York fashion shows they add to their text reports professional-standard video for broadcasters and high-quality stills for newspapers and glossy magazines with on-the-hoof camera phone footage of events backstage as models prepare for the catwalk.

**on the website**

- Read a report on the Mojo initiative
- What should online video be? Watch a discussion and add your comments to the debate
- What do video journalists do? See the diary of a video journalist
- Going live. The *Liverpool Post* broadcasts its editorial conference live to the web. Watch the footage.

5A2

## Creating video reports

Now let's get down to business.

If you have access to a video camera, great. If not, don't worry for now. The good news is that a dedicated video camera is not essential for this beginner's stage in video making. If you don't have access to one, you can use a modern mobile camera phone such as a Nokia N95 or N96, an iPhone, LG Viewty or something similar.

You don't need any fancy editing software for now either. We are going to edit using the free software that comes with your computer – Windows Movie Maker on a PC or iMovie on a Mac. We will publish video via both free social networking sites such as YouTube, from which your video can be instantly embedded in your blog or website, and directly into your free blog or website using the interface provided there.

However, what we are really concentrating on here is the content of our videos. So if your editorial experience does not match your technical know-how, you should follow the tuition and exercises at this level. Don't make the mistake of thinking video is all about technical expertise. As ever in multimedia journalism, content is king.

## Types of camera and basic operating techniques

If you are on a journalism course you no doubt have video cameras you can use. If not, here is some guidance on what to look for when you buy. Because models are frequently updated, we'll stick to the general things to watch for here.

**on the website**

- **Find links to the latest information on buying hardware.**

There are two broad types of video camera – 1CCD and 3CCD. CCD stands for charge coupled device. The difference is 1CCD has one computer chip and 3CCD has three. Why does it matter? Because cameras use these chips to process colour, and 3CCD cameras produce higher-quality video but are more expensive.

1CCD is fine for shooting video for the web, but if you need TV quality, 3CCD is necessary.

Your camera may record on to tape, a mini disc or a card. It doesn't matter which; the first two will give you an hour or so of video recording capacity, a card considerably more, and when the recording device is full you just pop in another one.

What is harder to get enough of is battery power. Many cameras have less than an hour of juice in them. That's no good if you are out and about shooting a range of stories – or even stuck at a major fire or accident with no socket to plug in to. So you need spare batteries. Buy the largest capacity batteries you can. Many manufacturers offer a three-hour battery. You need two or three of them to be really sure you will never get caught short of power.

## Using a tripod, a microphone and headphones

Try shooting a video without a tripod and you'll often get very jerky results. For a steady picture, a steady camera is essential. Sometimes you can improvise, propping or resting the camera on something solid. But a tripod is pretty important. Cameras usually have a thread in their underside, and tripods have a bolt you screw into it.

However good your video pictures, they are worthless if the audio track is poor. The microphone in your video camera is okay for getting general sound. But it can't distinguish between the sound you want – from the person speaking, say – and the general background noise. A hand-held mic – or a directional, "shotgun" mic that clips to the top of the camera – enables you to select and capture the sound that you want, and push the rest into the background.

Headphones help you get that all-important audio right. With them, you can hear how things sound and judge whether your levels are okay. Without, it's harder. Your camera will have a headphone jack; all you need is a basic headset to plug into it.



## *But what if you only have your mobile phone?*

The limitations of a camera phone include the lack of a zoom facility, so you can't get close to your subject without getting close, if you see what I mean. Another shortcoming is the lack of an external microphone jack, which means you can't cut out background noise, traffic, wind and so on.

It can also be hard to fix a phone to a tripod, and hence get a stable picture. But there are tripods with a clip or bracket on them that can be used to grasp the camera or phone. You can get tripods of just 15 cm or less that enable you to place your camera phone – discreetly – close to a speaker.

So, you have the gear, now to do some filming.

## *Setting up the camera*

Most cameras have controls that handle **focus** and **exposure** automatically. Professional video-camera people will tell you to turn them off and learn to use the manual controls because they give you much greater control over the pictures you get. But then, if you were Lewis Hamilton you might well turn off the traction control on a road-going Ferrari. Do that as an average driver and you'll be off the road in an instant.

Here's why they suggest it. **Auto focus** is great, but it can be fooled. If you are filming action and something moves across the screen between you and it, the camera auto focus will try to readjust to this new object, and lose focus on the subject you are interested in. If you focus automatically, that won't happen. But at this stage, with so much to think about, that's going to cause confusion, so we'll wait until we know more about filming before we take the pros' advice.

Many cameras also have automatic exposure controls – they make sure you have the right amount of light in most situations. Again, you can switch them off. This can be helpful where there is a very low level of light. But it's much easier as you start out to avoid filming in such circumstances if you possibly can. Another option is to use artificial lighting. Again, that's too complicated for now.

## *Framing a shot*

Here's the first bit of jargon that relates to video just as much as to still photography. It's the **rule of thirds**, which we covered in Chapter Three. We position the main elements in our shots – as much as possible – along one of those third lines and, ideally, to align with points at which the lines intersect. For instance, if you are filming a horizon, you want it to be either at the one-third or two-thirds point, not bang in the centre.

You don't want your subject bang in the middle of the shot. You want their eyes roughly aligned with the top horizontal line. That should leave enough "head room" above them so it doesn't look like they are banging their head on the ceiling, but not so much air above them that they appear to be sinking.

The person is too high in this frame.

She's just right in this one.

In this frame she is sinking horribly.

And if you are interviewing someone as part of a report, you don't want them looking straight at the camera and positioned in the centre of the screen. You want one of your vertical thirds lines running down through their face. And you want them looking into the shot.

Set your camera up just to one side of you, so that when the interviewee talks they look across the camera at you. This gives a clear sense of a conversation taking place which the viewer is observing. It also gives what is known as **lead space** – two-thirds of the screen is in front of the speaker. If you were panning to follow someone walking, or a car travelling, you'd follow the same rule.

### *Shoot your subject at roughly their eye level*

Shoot the subject from above and they look as if they are sinking down a hole. Shoot them from below and they may loom over you menacingly. If your tripod is too short, you'll need to improvise to get your camera at the right level.

### *Get in tight*

You want your subject to appear prominently in your shot. For that you need to use what is known as a **medium close-up (MCU)**. This is the most commonly used shot on web video.

You don't want a tiny head filling just one-tenth of the frame. If you film like that, when your video is screened on the 5 in. sq. screen of most websites the person talking will have virtually disappeared. Your subject needs to be the biggest thing in the screen. An artist standing alongside a sculpture that dwarfs her is not going to be the focus of the picture. Okay for an establishing shot, when we want to set the scene and give an overview, but if we want to see the artist speaking we'll need an MCU of them. Your subject should dominate the screen, but there should be some background visible around their talking head.

So, for each shot, get that right. It may mean moving the camera closer to the subject (if you are using a mobile phone) or using the **zoom** facility on a video camera to frame the shot correctly.

## *Avoid distracting backgrounds*

Activity behind your subject can be distracting for the viewer. They might watch the drunk trying to pick up a coin and stop listening to your interviewee. Likewise, you don't want an overflowing rubbish bin to mess up your shot, or to have a tree growing out of your interviewee's head. Adjust things to avoid such distractions.

Once you have your shot framed . . .

## *Turn on – and wait*

With each shot, set your camera recording for five to 10 seconds before you begin the action. That gives you some empty tape to edit out and a clear start to things. Turn on and immediately ask a question and you can get a messy start to things, and you leave yourself no footage to edit out. Also, if you are interviewing someone you may want to add a voice-over later introducing the person you are talking to, or create some other audio link from whatever your previous scene was. Having five to 10 seconds of them sitting doing nothing can be very useful. The viewer gets to see them and hear who they are before they start speaking.

When you have finished recording a video clip, again keep the camera running for five to 10 seconds before you switch it off. That gives you spare footage you can talk over or simply use to effect a transition to your next clip.

## *Oh, and don't forget . . .*

Keep quiet as you film. Avoid the temptation to mutter agreement with what your interviewee is saying, or to add your own comments. You can do that in a text interview but with a video everything you say – even your throat clearing – is picked up, and can ruin your footage.

## *The basic shots we use*

**on the website**

- Watch video examples of the various shots at:

  **http://movies.atomiclearning.com/k12/freeexamples.shtml**
  **http://www.nctj.com/resources.php**

### *Panning and zooming*

**Panning** is when the camera moves across a scene. **Zooming** can be either in or out. Zooming in is when the camera moves from a general view and progressively focuses in on one element of the original scene. Zooming out is the opposite.

Many people will say zooming should be banned. Too much camera movement can be confusing for the viewer, and zooming makes them seasick. Instead of zooming in, it is generally much better to frame your first shot, shoot it, and then stop filming and frame your second, MCU shot, hence avoiding the need to zoom.

However, hard and fast rules are really not something the multimedia journalist needs to adhere to. We can zoom if we have a good reason. The reason, as with everything we do, must be editorial. Does a zoom help our storytelling?

A zoom shot might be useful editorially if, for example, we are covering a case of vandalism in a town centre. We might start with a general shot of the damage, and then zoom in on a CCTV camera that caught what happened. A logical next shot here might be footage from that camera. Our voice-over would make it clear why we had chosen to use this sequence of images.

Panning shots are less controversial. If, for example, we want to demonstrate that a hurricane has ripped the roofs off a whole street of houses, and we can get a good vantage point, we might want a panning shot – starting at one end of the street and panning along it, demonstrating the geographic extent of the damage.

When we decide to film such a shot we can be thinking of the voice-over we might put with it. For example: "Five houses in Tooley Street had their roofs torn off. The worst damaged was Nancy Jones's at number three."

The next logical shot would be of Nancy Jones, talking about what has happened.

Panning shots should not be overused. A sequence of still shots is often preferable.

### *Establishing shots and detail shots*

These are also known as **long shots** and **close-ups**. You need to ensure you have enough video for your report, and that you have sufficient variety in terms of shots and the things filmed, to make a visually interesting report. The pictures you shoot need to be logically related in sequences.

An **establishing shot**, long shot or **general view** gives a broad picture of the scene. We use them sparingly because, on the small screens of online video, detail is lost, and the shot can be boring if held for too long, or if long shots are repeated too often.

If you are covering a road accident in which a bus has ploughed into a shop front, you might start with a general view of the scene – a **wide shot** that gives you the bus and the shop.

Editorially, that gives you the opportunity in your voice-over to give the essential details of the accident. You might do this segment of your report to camera, if you are able to stand with this scene behind you. You might look back to it, and if you have the luxury of someone else to operate your camera for you, they could then zoom in past you on to the scene of the wreckage.

Then you should shoot lots of detail.

A close-up – or **detail shot** – of the crumpled front of the bus, the shattered windscreen, a headlamp hanging out of its housing, would give you a good variety of shots. With the shop you might take a picture of what is left of the front, then focus on the point of impact between bus and building, then the shop display that has been sent sprawling.

These shots could be used in sequence, or broken up with interviews – an eyewitness, perhaps the fire and rescue officer at the scene, the shopkeeper.

Your report will probably be not much longer than two minutes, but you should shoot a good deal more than that. A ratio of five to one between what is shot and what makes it to the final edit is a reasonable guide for news reports. So aim for 10 minutes of footage for each two-minute report. Don't do much more, or your editing will be too slow.

### *Lead space*

This is the amount of space between the person in your shot and the edge of the frame that they are facing. As with stills photography, we don't want our subjects looking out of the frame. They should be looking in. If our subject is walking, they should be walking into the frame, with about two-thirds of the frame kept in front of them – as lead space.

### *Reverse shots*

A **reverse shot** is where you edit into an interview some footage of the interviewer. You will need to film this after your interview – unless you have the luxury of two cameras set up. You can just use it for reaction shots – a picture of you as the interviewer nodding or smiling – or you could ask some of your questions to camera, so there is the option to cut to you at one or more points during the interview.

Reverse shots are useful when you need to cover an edit. If you have two pieces of an interview that you want to bring together, simply butting the shots up against each other can leave a messy join. To avoid such awkwardness, the option to **cut to a reverse** can be useful. To do that effectively you need to know about **crossing the line** . . .

### *Crossing the line*

When you are filming two people talking – in a classic interview situation, say – you need to be careful of the **angles** from which you shoot them. If you shoot one person over the left shoulder of the interviewer, and then film some shots from the interviewee's perspective of the interviewer asking questions, you should shoot it over the interviewee's right shoulder. That way, when you cut between the two shots you see each speaker from the other's **perspective**. You keep your angles of shooting within **180 degrees** of each other – a straight line, in other words. Go beyond the 180 degrees and you are crossing the line, and you get a strange effect. If it helps, think of a straight line drawn between the noses of the interviewer and interviewee. If you film each of them individually, keep to the same side of that straight line.

### *Cutaways*

You may have noticed some other devices being used – a shot of the interviewee's clasped hands, a shot of a photo of the person they are talking about or any number of other devices. The generic name for these shots is **cutaways**.

At a press conference a general view of the assembled reporters scribbling in their notebooks is sometimes used, or an MCU of a cameraperson filming.

Those sometimes rather contrived shots are useful when you need to edit. Gather them, by all means, but avoid including them in your reports if you can.

### *Pieces to camera*

This is when you talk directly to the camera. In a very simple filming situation – for example where you are standing outside a court relating the verdict of the jury – the entire clip may be of you speaking. In more complex video reports one or more shots of you talking to camera can be useful as part of the **visual mix**.

Sometimes you will find yourself at the scene of an incident but the pictures you are able to get are very limited – maybe non-existent. So you set up your camera as close as you can to the incident, ideally with relevant activity shown in the background, and refer to it. In your report you need to fill in the description and detail that you can't show in pictures.

If, say, you are at the scene of a motorway pile-up, but can't show it, you can add some drama to your description of the incident: "Rescuers describe a really shocking scene just 100 metres behind me," for example.

Or, if you are outside a company AGM in which a chief executive is being harangued by shareholders, you need to give some of the drama of the angry scenes you can't show in your commentary.

Even if you are **going live to air** (see Chapter Seven for how to do that) you need a rough script, even if it is just the points you want to cover in order in your notebook, plus one or two key quotes you must get right. That's particularly important if you are outside a court and quoting from what a witness has just said inside.

You should warm up your voice (see pp. 155 and 453). You need to be relaxed, and use your hands to add expression to what you are saying. Stand or sit as straight as possible.

Take care with the location you choose. It shouldn't be so noisy that the viewer can't hear you or finds the extraneous sound distracting. Make sure the light is good – don't stand in the shadows or have brilliant sunlight behind you.

## *A good balance of shots to aim for*

A good balance between the various types of shot is around 25 per cent establishing, wide-angle or general shots, 25 per cent close-ups and 50 per cent medium close-up shots. Most shots will be five or six seconds in duration, except for the most important ones in which you have an interviewee delivering key sound bites, which can be longer. Detail shots, once edited into your report, might last for just two seconds, but make sure the viewer has time to take in what you are showing.

## *Plan*

It might be tempting to pitch straight into an interview. If at all possible – don't. Take time to prepare, or the footage you film will be messy and hard to edit.

### *The questions to ask*

When you interview for print, you have a great deal of leeway in how you frame your questions and the order you ask them in. You can use questions to gain basic information that you have no intention of using in direct quotes.

With video you need to be more disciplined. Ask your information-hunting questions before you start the camera rolling. Don't waste video and battery power on fundamentals. When you come to film you need to ask fully rounded questions. You can't interrupt to gain clarification, and you can't hunt for quotes. You need fully rounded answers. Your initial questions, before you film, will give you a good basic briefing about the story and your interviewee, which means you can effectively and efficiently direct the interview.

Ideally, you want to be able to cut out most of your questions and let the interviewee's answers flow from one to another.

### *Shoot to edit*

Another piece of jargon to learn: **shoot to edit**. That means when you are on a story think of how you are going to tell it in pictures. Shoot the pictures that you need to tell the story, just as in reporting for a text story you will be gathering the quotes, facts and information you need to make your story hold together on the page. This story has to hold together on screen. You don't want any gaps, you need to be able to set the scene for the viewer, take them into the story, explore it, give all the relevant angles, get comment from all sides.

Remember you are not just *telling* stories on video, you are *showing* them. The pictures are your illustrations.

Think about how your shots fit together before you take them.

Shoot a wide, medium and tight shot of each thing that happens, each element of your story.

Consider how you want to place yourself, as the reporter, in the story. Perhaps you just want to drop a short piece to camera to stand at the top of the report. Maybe you also want to tail it with a final comment to camera. Maybe you want to appear at some point in the story. You could use one, some, all or none of the above.

### *Sequencing*

The key to good shooting is known as **sequencing**. You need to think of sequences of pictures that tell the story, and that lead effectively from one to another. Good sequencing enables us to tell a story quickly. So, for example, if you want to tell the story of a disabled person's difficult journey to work you would follow that journey. At each point along it you need to get a range of shots that show what problems they face in detail. So, at the bus stop we have a shot of them waiting for the bus; then a shot of the bus approaching. It would be ideal to cut from that to a shot from inside the bus – although this requires some planning and extra time

– as it pulls up alongside them and the doors open. You might then shoot from the person's perspective, at a **low angle**, showing the challenge of getting up into the vehicle.

The sequence of getting the chair onto the bus can then be followed, with a **mix of shots** showing the whole scene, close-ups of faces, perhaps of a hand reaching out to help. When these shots are cut together into a fast-moving sequence we get a very clear and fluid piece of video.

Getting material on video gives you the essentials for all sorts of reports. Your video can be edited into packages of different lengths.

The sound can be used for audio reports. You could also use it as the soundtrack on a slide show of still images.

**on the website**

- Test your knowledge with an interactive quiz on the shots we use
- Watch a comprehensive introduction to video equipment and shooting
- Get the best, fully up-to-date advice on choosing a camera and other equipment
- See the full range of video shots we use demonstrated
- Watch masterclasses on video.

5A3

## Styles of video report

We began this chapter with a quick survey of the different types of video report. Let's look at them in more detail now. Once again, you'll need the online version of this chapter open on your browser to make sense of what we are covering.

### *Text-plus*

This is the simplest form of multimedia journalism. If you know that the format you are expected to follow is text-plus – that is, your text report will appear as a screen on the website, with a link to a video or audio clip – then you don't necessarily need to film the whole of the interview. Instead, once you have gathered the material you need for your text report, you

can set up your camera and ask the key questions that you know will get you the sound bites you need for the video. That's a much more efficient way of getting material for a video or audio clip.

The simplest example is where you have obtained a piece of footage – it might be from a CCTV camera of a brawl between rival groups of football fans or it could come from the emergency services and show a fire, a rescue, a horrific crash or a high-speed chase between a speeding motorist and a police car shot from a helicopter.

This piece of self-contained video might be allowed to stand on its own, with your text report filling in the details of the incident and containing quotes from those involved.

A slightly more advanced version of such a story would add a voice-over to the clip, which could be, for example, a police officer talking us through the incident.

The audio might be a voice-over from us, giving a similar description, or it might be a mini audio package, including clips from one or more of those involved, linked by our commentary.

## on the website

- **Find this and all the other examples discussed here on the website. The URLs for the videos are here, but you'll find it much easier to click on the links to them that you'll find on the website.**

**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_znZ1TJugw**

Here's an example from the *Hull Daily Mail*'s website of CCTV footage of violence in the city centre being used as the main picture element in a report. This package also includes stills photography and a voice-over about the court case that resulted from the incident. Take a look at it and see what you think.

## questions

Analyse the way the report has been put together. Does it have a logical structure? Do picture and voice-over combine well?

Don't read on until you have thought about it.

The report begins with CCTV footage of the fight. The voice-over explains what is happening and that a court case has resulted from it. Stills are used of each of the defendants as they approach the court for their hearing, with a voice-over saying who they are.

The report goes back, visually, to more from the CCTV camera as the reporter explains that those fighting were rival football fans – the local Hull City team had just suffered a defeat.

We are told that those fighting had just been watching the game in a town centre bar. The voice-over goes on to tell us of their punishments. The audio concludes with the judge's condemnation of binge-drinking-related violence and the police hailing the use of CCTV in fighting crime.

This is a good example of a logical, well-constructed report in which spoken word and images work well together. You can imagine the text report that would have been written for print, or if no CCTV footage was available. The story as reported follows the structure of a text report, but is enhanced and illustrated by the footage that the multimedia journalist has been able to obtain.

This example illustrates that there is no fundamental difference in reporting for text or multimedia, but that if you have video available, you can use it to illustrate and enhance your report.

Here's an example of a murder story from a local paper called the *Hinckley Times* (**http://www.hinckleytimes.net/**). Here's the link to the text story:

**http://www.hinckleytimes.net/news-in-hinckley/local-news/hinckley-news/2008/09/09/murder-enquiry-launched-after-brutal-stabbing-at-hinckley-allotments-105367-21708768/**

Here's the link to the video, which you can also see on the website:

**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjiSbvrIpEc**

There is a further text story when charges are made:

**http://www.hinckleytimes.net/news-in-hinckley/local-news/hinckley-news/2008/09/18/21-year-old-man-charged-with-murder-of-hinckley-man-105367-21846097/**

And tributes to the murdered man can be found at:

**http://www.hinckleytimes.net/news-in-hinckley/local-news/hinckley-news/2008/09/18/tributes-to-the-big-joker-105367-21846068/**

## questions

What do you think of this video? Is there anything about it that could be improved? Think about the commentary, the way the footage is shot and edited together and anything else that strikes you. Is anything missing?

Don't read on until you have studied it and reached your conclusions.

The video begins abruptly. The commentary is spoken in a rushed, unclear way. At one point ambient audio – a car door slamming and someone speaking – cuts across the commentary from the reporter. The reporter has spoken to locals and has their views on what may have been behind the killing, but we do not hear or see these people speaking. Instead the reporter summarises what he has been told.

The commentary ends halfway through the video.

Filming is jerky. The camera roves around the scene of two police vehicles seemingly randomly. At one point the reporter attempts to zoom in over the fence to the allotments where the murder occurred, but the viewer can see nothing more.

This clip is not strong enough to stand as a text-plus video. This footage is not informative, and it would have been better to create a coherent video package, with interviews and a piece to camera from the reporter.

## *Video packages*

There are two basic types. The first is the breaking-news report. The second is the more considered diary item, or feature.

**A breaking-news report** may have very limited video content. You might, for example, just have a clip shot by the fire brigade of a major blaze, plus an interview with an officer, or a

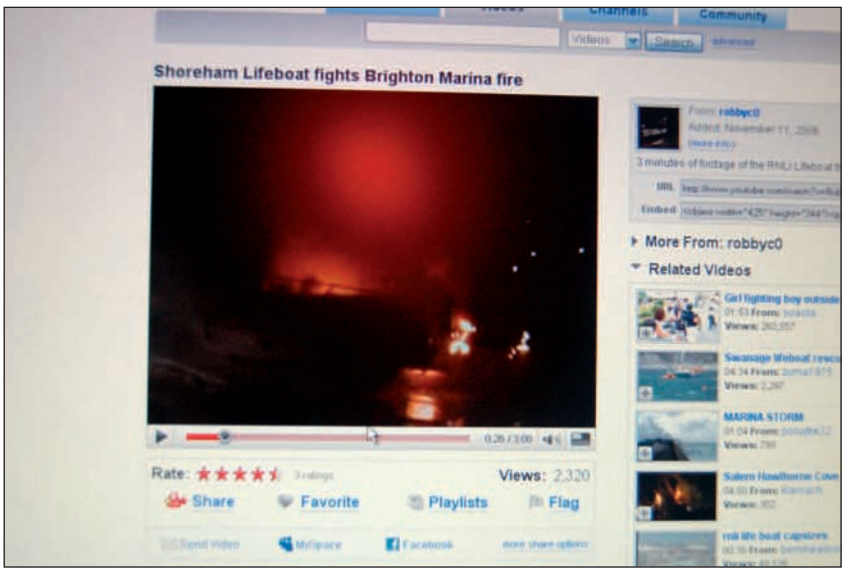
clip from a CCTV camera of a crime that the police hope you can help them solve, plus an interview. Perhaps you have a brief statement from a solicitor at the end of a trial about how relieved his client is that justice has been done and he is a free man, plus footage of the man and his family celebrating.

Perhaps you have access to a press conference or a product launch. Either way, you may have a limited range of options in terms of what you film. You may well not know what the story is in advance, and even if you do there will probably not be much opportunity to film a wide range of shots and material and hence create a well-rounded report. Not a problem, just film what you can.

However, many breaking-news packages are more considered, and have a good deal more to them. They will then follow the package characteristics, with an opening, establishing shot, a number of interviews, film of locations and individuals involved in the story, and very likely a piece to camera.

Here are some examples of breaking-news packages. The first is built around supplied footage from the RNLI.

*Fire at Brighton Marina – from the* Brighton Argus




**http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=Rubk-sID36A**

This video consists entirely of footage of a boat fire provided by the rescue services. The reporter has added a voice-over.

## questions

Look at the video and see what you think of its construction, the footage used and the voice-over. Does the reporter say too much, too little or just enough? Don't read on until you have made your mind up.

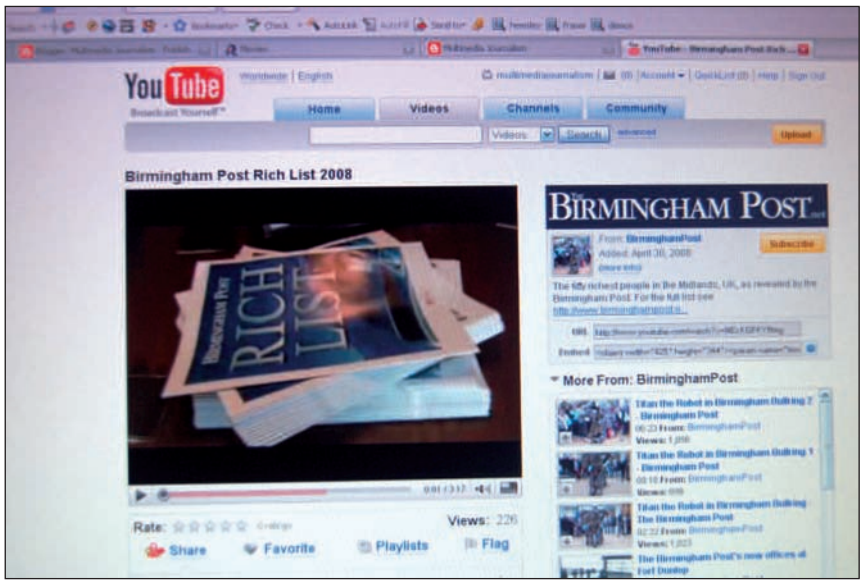
The video here is shot at night and is not as clear as it might be, but it is certainly worth having. The reporter lets the pictures speak for themselves and adds just the essentials in his voice-over to explain what we are seeing.

With a **diary item**, you have more scope. You can think about finding the best way to tell the story. You need to think how your pictures – even more than your words – will help you do that. So, first you need to decide what the story will say. Then you need the pictures that illustrate the story. Then, if you put pictures and words together correctly, the job is done.

To make the video work you need to plan ahead. You need to record interviews, and you will need the combination already mentioned of general view, medium close-up and detail shots, over which you can lay your voice-over track.

The next news package has more to it.

### Birmingham Post *Rich List*



This is an interesting example of multimedia journalism at work. The rich list appears as a print supplement, and there is this introduction to it on the paper's website:

**http://www.birminghampost.net/birmingham-business/richlist2008/**

Within that report is embedded – right at the top – a video report of the launch, and later on there is the option to download an Excel spreadsheet. There are also links to more on each of the 50 people on the list.

**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NExKGFKYHmg**

## questions

Take a look at the video, analyse it and decide how effective it is. Don't read on until you have done so.

The video begins with an effective establishing shot of a pile of the Rich List magazines. The voice-over gives an essential introduction to the list and explains that this is the launch, taking place on the 37th floor of a new building in Birmingham city centre – in the city's highest apartment. We get a shot out over the city. Words and pictures work well together. The voice-over explains that the reason for the region's wealth is right at the feet of the movers and shakers attending the launch, and links neatly with the first interviewee, the editor of the *Evening Mail*. The interviewee explains that property has been behind the boom, hence this launch at the city's most prestigious building.

Things stall slightly now as we get the editor puffing (promoting) the Rich List supplement, over more pictures of the city skyline.

But we get going again with clips of key people at the event explaining what is behind a collective £5 billion increase in the wealth of those on the list. There is good quick cutting between speakers to ensure that what they say is concise and adds to what has already been said.

The report ends with an effective voice-over looking forward, and saying those who took risks in 2007, and were enjoying the results, would be more cautious in future.

So we get a report with a clear beginning, middle and end. Generally it works well.

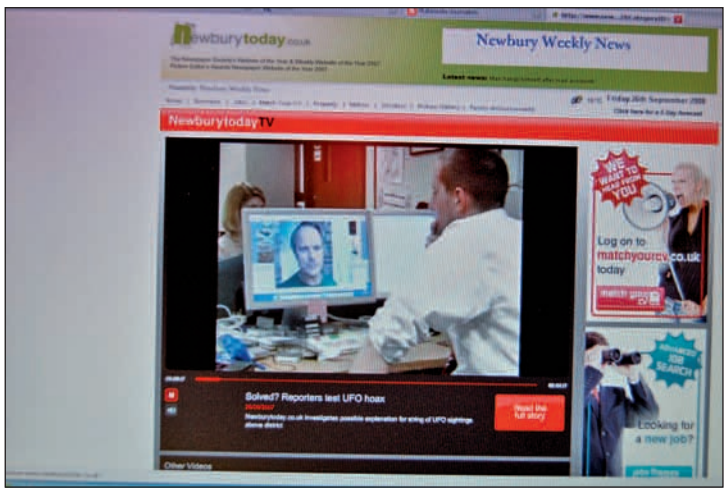
## *Features packages*

Features packages have less of a news imperative to them. With less vital information to pack in, they can be more leisurely. Just as with a text feature, as we'll explore in Chapter Twelve, they can be more idiosyncratic. The story might be quirky or amusing. The package may be more complex in terms of the amount of film, and research, that has gone into it.

Here are a couple of examples.

### *A UFO sighting*

**http://www.newburytoday.co.uk/News/FlashNewsPlayer.aspx?articleID=5262&CategoryID**




This report about a supposed UFO sighting is from the *Newbury Weekly News*.

### questions

Take a look at it, consider the structure and content. Don't read on until you have decided what you think.

This is a fairly complex and well-executed report. It is linked from a text report but once the reader clicks on the video they find a package that is entirely self-contained and gives a great deal more information than the short text item.

The package begins with the device of showing a previous video report – of an eye-witness – on a video screen. This makes it clear that what we will see in this report is an update on a previous one.

We next come to a piece to camera, as the reporter talks about the new development in the story. His commentary is overlaid with stills from the original report and the images of UFOs that it contained. Then we come up to date. A correspondent thinks he knows why people were fooled. He has sent in a balloon attached to a flare, which, when lit, fills it with hot air – and an eerie light – and sends the balloon up into the sky.

The next sequence sees the reporter launch the balloon while a colleague films the original eyewitness to the supposed UFO sighting looking on. He says this isn't like what he saw, but doesn't sound entirely convincing. The scene then switches to the newspaper office, where a local astronomer sees video footage of the experiment. He says this could easily be an explanation for the original sightings.

Here's another features package.

### *Singing dogs*

This is one from the *South Wales Post* (**www.thisissouthwales.co.uk**) about something called the Swansea Jack Dog Choir:

**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=db4NEvwV72w**

## questions

Take a look at it and see what you think. Don't read on until you have reached your conclusions.

The video starts slightly jerkily and moves from footage of a person with a dog to a cameraman and video reporter. There is no establishing shot. We don't know where we are or what is happening. The woman and dog appear to be in a marquee. An establishing shot of the outside of the tent, and any appropriate sign announcing the event, would have established immediately what the report was to cover.

We go back to the woman and dog. There is no voice-over. Then we move to pictures of a man and the reporter's voice-over starts: "I'm talking to . . ."

Until now the viewer has no real idea of what is going on. There is no clear logic or structure to the video up to this point. The reporter launches into a lengthy explanation of the background to the event and what is happening, while the camera remains on the person who he will be interviewing. This audio ought to have been overlaid on the earlier pictures.

When the interview begins the subject goes into a long explanation of what is happening. This makes for dull footage. This background could have been gathered by the reporter in advance and used minimally as voice-over to give viewers the context they need. Much could be cut out.

Frustratingly, there is a lot of wailing of what sounds like dogs in the background. Is this them auditioning for the choir? If so, it would have made much better footage.

The interview continues with the audio overlaid on shots of various dogs that have been auditioned, but no film of them 'singing'. Finally, we do get footage of a howling basset hound. This would have made an arresting opening to the video. At three minutes 15 seconds it's probably twice as long as it should be.

This is a funny story, but it is reported deadpan.

## *News bulletins*

Some online video takes its cue from TV news bulletins. Let's look at some.

This one is from the *Hull Daily Mail*'s site (**www.thisishullandeastriding.co.uk**):

**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yxDmgMoQOw0**

This is a very simple report, consisting of a reporter speaking to camera, with just stills – which are panned across – to illustrate the stories covered. There are several shots of the story as it appears in the newspaper. This is a minimalist approach to an online news bulletin. What do you think of it? Is it effective? Would it make you read the newspaper?

This news bulletin comes from the *Lancashire Evening Post*:

**http://www.lep.co.uk/video.aspx?VideoPath=PRES/260908_bulletin512k_stream.wmv&VideoID=25389&ArticleID=4533095**

It follows a similar format to that of the *Hull Daily Mail*. Compare the bulletins above with that from the *Newbury Weekly News*:

**http://www.newburytoday.co.uk/News/FlashNewsPlayer.aspx?articleID=107&CategoryID=5**

This is a more complex report. There are stills photographs, but the bulletin also includes video clips.

## *Other studio-based video*

Here's an example from a website called **www.brandrepublic.co.uk**. It is an online portal site that, as well as creating a good deal of its own multimedia content, also takes material from a number of magazines owned by the Haymarket group, including *Campaign* and *Media Week*. These are B2B titles read by those who work in these industries.

On its Brandrepublic TV channel it runs very professionally produced discussions of issues affecting the industries it covers. Here is an example:

**http://www.brandrepublic.tv/24.asx**

This style of video report is rather like a TV magazine programme, and can have production values as high, as this example shows. It has studio discussions alongside video inserts and contributions from experts, and it lasts 15 minutes.

## *Other uses of video*

Another way Brandrepublic uses video is to run live coverage of sessions at industry conferences and presentations.

Here's an example. It embedded videos of speakers into a text report on a Blue Skies Marketing Recruitment seminar. This content was originally streamed live to the web, and was later published on YouTube and embedded into the website:

**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_68_ZFx87rM**

### questions

What do you think? How does this video differ from the other Brandrepublic one we looked at? Don't read on until you have made up your mind.

This video's roots in **live streaming** are apparent. It's unedited, and the production values are much lower than the other report's. There is a problem seeing the PowerPoint presentation that the speaker keeps referring to. Either you can't see the slide, or you see the slide and the speaker is tiny – and you still can't read it.

I don't mean to rip into this report, though. Think of its purpose. If I was in this industry and couldn't make this presentation, then being able to watch it on the web is a great second best.

It's worth making the point here that, as the examples above demonstrate, the quality of video produced on news websites varies widely. Generally speaking, quality is improving, and there are more and more examples of video that is at – or approaching – broadcast quality. But it doesn't have to be perfect to be of use to our viewers.

Poor-quality video is no problem at all if it shows dramatic events and is the best footage we have.

## *Going live*

You can broadcast live to the web or your blog from your mobile phone. You sign up to a service such as Qik (**www.qik.com**) or Flixwagon (**www.flixwagon.com**) by registering your mobile phone number with the service and receive a code for **embedding** your video channel into a website or blog. The live broadcasts you make are also recorded and stored on the service, so that you can link to each of them after the live event, if you wish, and keep them available to your readers.

You aren't going to get great-quality video like this, but imagine you find yourself caught up in a newsworthy event, or are sent to cover a fire or other incident. You can stream live footage of the event straight to the web. You could conduct interviews and provide your own, unscripted voice-over commentary to the pictures you are streaming.

This technology can be very useful at a press conference. While other reporters plonk their audio machines on the desk in front of the speaker, you can attach your camera phone to a discreet mini tripod and you have set up a **live video feed** of the conference to your site.

**on the website**

- More on how to broadcast live from your mobile phone
- An assessment from the BBC's dot.life blog of going live from a mobile
- More on the Reuters Mojo experiment.

5A4

## Writing for video

In writing for video, your words must be designed to be spoken, not read. No doubt you will want to write your script down, but don't be fooled into using words and phrases in a script that look great on the page, but which jar when read out.

The real test of your video script is how it sounds when read out loud. Your tone of voice matters very much here. Imagine you are telling your story to a friend in the pub. That should help you remove formalities and wordiness. You need to be direct and informal.

What you say must be crystal clear or the viewer will miss it and, unlike with text, where the reader can easily run over the last sentence again if it didn't make sense the first time, video viewers are unlikely to go back for a second attempt at understanding you. So, restrict your sentences to 20 words on average and focus on one thought per sentence.

Keep things concrete. Instead of saying, "The current crisis in the financial sector has leached into the mortgage market, with the cost of a home loan increasing by 0.5 per cent from tomorrow," say, "Householders face a rise of £50 a month in their mortgage payments."

One key other difference is that if your video package is to be part of a bulletin the newsreader will need some words – a cue – to introduce it. This cue is often very similar to an intro on a hard news story in print. It is normal practice for the reporter to write this cue, so that they

can then make sure they don't repeat the cue at the start of their video report. It doesn't always work out like that, but that's the idea.

The cue often robs you of your hard news line, and means you may have to take a more feature-type approach to the start of your script for the video.

For example, here's a cue for a murder story:

### Cue

**Police seeking the killer of prostitutes Annette Dowling and Kerry Harker fear their murderer has struck again.**

**The body of a young woman was discovered this morning by a man walking his dogs in woods at Sefton Hall in Warwickshire. Andrew Knight reports.**

### Script for video

**It was shortly after dawn that Adrian Jenkins's two Alsatians drew him to what looked like a pile of rags. It was only when he touched the bundle that he realised he had come across the body of a young woman . . .**

When you are reporting using video, start with the pictures. The big pitfall for reporters who are more comfortable with text can be that they write their text story – which is incredibly wordy by video standards – and then try to fit pictures to it. That's putting the cart before the horse. You'll find you simply don't have the footage to cover your words and that even if you did your video would be far too long. You won't get more than 150–180 words per minute of video, which means that even on a two-minute story you don't have much more than 300–350 words to play with. So your 20-second voice-over has to be delivered in 50–60 words.

Another key difference between a video report and a text news story is the ending. In text our ending is the least important part of our news story. With video our final line should have impact. We need to end with a punch.

Never forget you are telling your story through pictures. When you get back to edit, first put your pictures in sequence. Some, perhaps all, of those clips will have voice to go with them. The interviews you conducted drive the report forward. Usually you will want some voice-over, but your job as a video reporter is to introduce the report and end it – **top and tail** it, to use some more jargon – and then to interject to move the story on and to provide essential

links between the elements you have drawn together and the various people you have interviewed.

That's not to say that words aren't important. There will be things you have to say to make your report complete, and for viewers to follow it, and sometimes you will be fitting pictures to cover those key points.

Your words should add to the pictures – not simply describe what the viewer can see. If you are showing a scene of a burning boat, there is no point saying the boat went up in flames. Give additional information, such as how long it took to put the fire out, how many rescuers fought it or the cost of the damage caused.

And your tone of voice is crucial. The conversational style we spoke of as an ideal for text reporting in Chapter One is just as important here. When you record your voice-over, imagine you are telling your friends the story.

5A5

## Presenting skills

### *Learn to speak well*

You may have a good script, but reading it badly can ruin your video. A monosyllabic mumble does not enhance even strong pictures. So take a tip from professional performers and warm your voice up before you tackle recording your narration. Stretch your facial muscles by opening your mouth as wide as you can and moving your jaw from left to right. Then do some humming or singing. Go through the vocal range from high to low and back again. Sing a couple of verses of any song you know.

You want your delivery to be conversational, but with a few enhancements. Stress on important words will help.

Go through your script and decide on the words you need to emphasise to keep what you read interesting and easy to understand. You need to find the essential words in your script – the ones that, when emphasised, give the gist of the story and make the meaning crystal clear.

These are often known as the **operative words**:

- Raise or lower the volume of your voice when speaking the operative words
- Alter your pitch on these words, going either up or down the scale a notch
- Alter your rhythm, pausing either before or after the operative word
- Change speed. Keep your speed up as you move through less important information, but slow down when you get to the key bit that needs emphasis
- But don't become stagey.

5A6

# Putting your video report together

We are going to get on and edit our pictures now, using either iMovie or Movie Maker, the free software that, respectively, comes with your Mac or PC.



## *Editing video with iMovie*

There is a very clear and comprehensive help guide with iMovie, but here are my tips on getting things done easily.

### *To transfer video from camera to iMovie software*

Put your camera in **play** mode. If you have a camera that uses tape, rewind to the start.

Connect the camera to your computer with a firewire lead. Click on **import**. Your clips will import into the clips grid on the iMovie interface.

Once all have uploaded to your computer, click the **slider** from the **camera symbol** to the **scissors symbol**.

You get a dialogue that tells you that **Letterboxing** is going on. As each clip is transferred to iMovie you will see a black band appear at the top and bottom of it. This takes a few minutes.

### *Prepare to edit your clips*

Now you can see your clips and view them in the viewing area top left.

At this stage you can decide what order they ought to go in. You might want to split some clips into two or more parts. We'll look at that shortly.

### *Add clips to the timeline*

At the bottom of the screen is your timeline. You can place your clips there, in whatever order you like, and they will play as parts of a full video.

Don't just **drag** them down there. If you do, you will have lost your unedited clip. Instead, **cut and paste** them, which means the unedited originals will remain in the grid – handy if you want to go back to your originals.

### *Trim clips*

Now you can cut each clip to the length you want. If you want all of it, fine; if you want a bit at the beginning, middle or end, you can cut out what you don't need.

You can look closely at each clip by dragging the slider along and look at it **frame by frame**. Beneath the slider are two **triangular symbols**. The one on the right denotes the end of the clip, the one on the left the start of the clip. Drag the right one to the final frame you want to keep in. Then drag the left-hand one to the first frame. Right click on your mouse and select the option **Crop**. Now you have your trimmed clip.

Do that for all your clips.

If you want to split a clip you should first select the point at which you want to divide it. That gives you two separate clips and you can edit each as you like.

Right click on it and choose the option **Split**.

### *Create transitions between clips*

You don't have to use transitions – such as fading to black or white – between clips, but they can be useful if you want to mask a slightly awkward edit.

To the right, beneath the clips grid, are some transition options. Click on **Transitions**. Select the one you like – **fade in** and **fade out** are commonly used – and drag them to the appropriate points between your clips.

### *Add titles*

Click on the **Titles** option beneath the clips grid and you get a wide range to choose from. Experiment with them. You can have titles either on a black background – make sure **over black** is selected – or over the opening images in your video.

Select the one you want, type the text you want in the box provided, and drag and drop into your video where you want it to appear.

### *Add audio*

You might just want the audio track that you recorded with your video. If you don't – perhaps you want a voice-over at the start, or a commentary over some of the images, dipping in and out of people in the video speaking – then you can add an extra audio track to the video. Click on the **audio** option and you can record straight to the computer, or select from **music and sound effects**.

Another option is to record your voice to your video camera but discard the image track, and just keep and paste in the audio beneath other pictures.

To do that, click the **audio** button and click **Import new audio**. **Clip** it and **paste** it beneath the appropriate pictures.

You have the option of either muting audio tracks completely or moving the audio levels up or down with a simple click and drag facility.

So, if you want to use one audio track some of the time but another at other times, you just **mute** the one you don't want when you don't want it.



## *Editing with Windows Movie Maker*

There are four main areas to Movie Maker: the **Tasks** pane, **Collections**, the **Preview** screen and the **Timeline**.

### *Capture video*

First you must capture or import video footage from your camera. Connect it with firewire or USB – firewire is much faster if you have it on your camera. Click on **Capture from Video Device** in the **Tasks** pane.

As your video is loaded into Movie Maker the clips will appear in **Collections**. Once they are all there, save them as a **project**.

### *Organise your clips*

You can view your clips individually by clicking on them. The selected clip appears in the monitor panel to the right. You can increase the size of this monitor by clicking and dragging on its left-hand side.

Once you have reviewed all your clips you can begin to create your movie. Drag the clips, in the order you think you'd like to use them, down to the **Timeline** panel at the bottom of the screen. You can also maximise this panel by clicking on its top line and dragging this up. If you do that you'll see that there are other elements in the timeline, for **transitions**, **audio**, **audio/music** and **title/overlay**.

### *Edit your clips*

Play your video through and see how it looks. You may want to rearrange the order of your clips, and perhaps drop some. Perhaps one or more clips would be better split into two or more parts and those parts distributed at various points along the timeline of your video.

If you click on **Clip** in the top menu bar the drop-down reveals the controls for achieving this. You'll see **set start trim point**, **set end trim point** and **split** among the other commands.

First, let's look at splitting clips. Play the clip and pause it at the point where the split should come. Click on **Split** and you have two parts. You can move those parts around by clicking and dragging them.

Once you are happy with the order of your clips you can set the start and end trim points of each one, using the commands mentioned.

If you want to take a chunk out from the middle of a clip, you need to split it first, at either the beginning or the end of the unwanted section. Then you can use the appropriate trim command to remove what you don't need.

### *Introduce transitions between clips*

In the movie tasks panel, under **2. Edit Movie** you will find a range of options, including **Video effects**. Click on this and the collections panel fills with many options. If you use effects, keep them simple. A simple **fade in**, from black at the start of a clip, and **fade out**, to black at the end, is the most you will need. For a news video you probably don't even need that. The sharp transitions between clips are fine.

### *Add narration*

Now you can add the elements of voice-over that you want. First, write your script and rehearse reading it as the video plays to be sure that the words you want to add fit the appropriate pictures. You can then record your voice-over directly into your computer by attaching a microphone to it. Click on **Tools**, then **Narrate timeline**. When you are ready, click on **Narrate timeline**, and your voice will be recorded. You can narrate the entire movie or one clip at a time. If there are points at which you would like to replace the sound on your video with your voice, you can click on the audio you want to remove and then, from the options that appear, click on **mute**. If you don't do that, both sound tracks will blend together.

Alternatively, you can speak your voice-over into your camera and then import it into your current movie project. If you drag your new audio down to the audio track in your timeline panel you will find that whatever picture accompanies it will not appear.

Finally, under **Edit Movie** you will also find **Make Titles or Credits**.

### *Saving your finished movie*

Once you are done, click on **Save Movie to my Computer** under the heading **3. Finish Movie** in the left-hand top panel.

on the website

- Watch tutorials on iMovie and Movie Maker.

5A7

## Publishing online

So now you have your finished video report ready to be published online. The video file you have edited is too large to put on the web. It has to be compressed first. At this stage, you don't need to worry about how that happens, because Blogger or Webs – or indeed YouTube, Facebook or any of the many other platforms that allow you to publish video – does it automatically.

As a general rule, these programs reduce the file size to 1 MB per minute or less.

Let's go through the process of adding video to your Blogger blog and your Webs site. It's very straightforward. With Blogger, open a posting box and click on the **video** option. You are asked to select video from various sources, including from your computer. Find the one you want and upload it. You can add text to the posting.

In Webs, open a new contents box, give it a name and click on the **yellow video button** at top left.

You can also add your video to a site such as YouTube. YouTube hosts the video and gives you a link and the code to enable you to embed it anywhere you like. Many publishing organisations use YouTube to do this, particularly if they are keen to have readers take videos that they like and embed them in other sites. You can create a YouTube channel for your videos.

By no means all publishers embrace this viral element of the web, but many others see the vast potential in getting their name known for good video. They let anyone who likes take it because the payback is that they become much better known and expect the videos copied to drive traffic back to them.

on the website

- Watch video masterclasses
- Have your videos appraised by experts

- Read updates on latest best practice
- Consult the extensive links database
- Take part in an interactive quiz to test how much you have learned about video.

5A8

## Exercises and projects

The exercises relate directly to material covered in this chapter. The projects relate to the longer-term enterprises that you are recommended to develop as you work your way through this book.

### Exercise 1

Watch online video reports. How well has the reporter tackled the essentials we have covered in this chapter?

Assess the framing of shots, the length and sequencing of shots and the variety of video material. How well is the story told? Does the voice-over work well? If the reporter does a piece to camera, how effectively has it been handled?

### Exercise 2

Watch TV news. Analyse the make-up of their video packages. Are they more sophisticated than those you see online? If so, in what ways? Are there things you can learn from them that could be applied to your web video reports?

### Exercise 3

Practise your interviewing. If you can get a friendly official, activist, press officer or other person to take part in a training session, practise on them. Tell them what you want to interview them about, and go through the recommended process. Carry out an initial interview to get the essential facts clear in your mind, then do a taped interview. Analyse your tapes to see how you have done.

### Exercise 4

Take a number of reports from newspapers – up- and down-market – and read them out loud. How close are they to good video scripts? Rewrite them so that they work well when spoken.

### Exercise 5

Identify some news organisations that have channels on YouTube and subscribe to them. Look at the videos they post.

### Projects

These projects relate to the websites and blog you are recommended to be working on as you go through this book. The stories you choose to cover must be tailored to the interests and concerns of the audiences you are catering for.

These projects can be developed as part of group work on a journalism course, or informally by groups of students, or by individuals.

1 Create five video reports for your website. Find a story, contact the individuals you need to help you tell it, set up interviews and go through the process from preparation and filming to editing and posting online. Get colleagues, tutors or friends to watch and critique them. Learn from your mistakes and try again. Do such reports regularly until your feedback tells you they are professional.

2 Attend an event – a sports game, a performance or anything else that you find newsworthy. Do a two-minute piece to camera. Get colleagues, tutors or friends to watch and critique it. Learn from your mistakes and try again. Do such reports regularly until your feedback tells you they are professional.

3 Do a live report from an event that is streamed directly to your website or blog.

## chapters


6 **Writing news stories and reporting live**

7 **Publishing platforms for live reporting**

8 **User-generated content and email bulletins**

9 **Publishing platforms for user-generated content and email bulletins**

10 **Still pictures and audio**

11 **Video**


## part B

# Building proficiency

This part of *Multimedia Journalism* is about building on all you learned in Part A. We'll take you to the next stage across the media.

### Aims of this section

Here you will develop the ability to:

- File live from a fast-moving story using text and video
- Use the web for highly effective research
- Report throughout the story cycle
- Develop your interviewing skills
- Improve your website and blog
- Develop a dialogue with the reader, viewer or listener
- Encourage, manage and develop user-generated content
- Use an SLR digital camera to take high-quality stills
- Record, edit and publish audio slide shows
- Learn to produce video that approaches broadcast quality
- Learn to produce video that puts you and the reader at the heart of the story.

chapter six

# *Writing news stories and reporting live*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

- The policy, followed by most newspapers and magazines, of publishing news on the web first, and the impact that has on the way journalists work
- The demands of 24/7 news gathering
- Starting reporting before an event; making reporting a by-product of our research
- Breaking-news tickers and the value of Twitter for journalists
- How to write an immediate breaking-news story for the web
- How to involve readers in our reporting and make user-generated content (UGC) part of our news coverage
- How to follow up with a more complete web story
- How to serve a number of deadlines across the day
- Writing comprehensive stories for print
- Writing email bulletins.

We are going to be very busy in this chapter as we build on our basic knowledge of writing for online and print.

We are going to look at the cycle that any given story follows, and how to report on it on all the platforms at our disposal – from the first breaking-news ticker or tweet through online updates and on to in-depth reporting, comment and analysis in print. While we'll be focusing

primarily on text, the other media cannot now be separated from our reporting, so they find their way in here too, as well as being covered in their own dedicated chapters following this one.

We'll deal mainly with writing the words – and the journalistic skills and challenges in doing that – in this chapter, and run over the technical side of the publishing cycle in detail in Chapter Seven, on publishing platforms.

In doing the above we'll also cover:

- What can be done best online
- What can best be done in print
- Ensuring print and online work effectively together.

We'll take a more detailed look at the art of interviewing.

Finally, we'll also be looking at reporting more complex stories in more challenging situations, including

- Reporting from press conferences
- Covering public meetings
- Reporting on public events
- Court reporting.

We'll bring our knowledge of the story cycle to bear in these situations.

At the end of the chapter are a range of exercises and projects to enable you to practise what you have learned.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- A wide range of videos illustrating the material covered here
- Masterclasses on news reporting
- A wealth of links to further information.

6B1

## Online-first publication and the impact on how journalists work

When deadlines were relatively few and far between, news had usually reached a fairly complete form before it was published. News was formal and polished before the public read, listened to or watched it.

With multimedia journalism that's all changed. Now there are as many opportunities to update a story as the story demands. If we have a fast-moving story it can be changing and morphing as the minutes, hours, days and weeks pass.

This means that news stories are often in a state of constant evolution. Where once we could think of stories as having a particular angle or development for a particular day, now we find that they have many twists and turns during that day.

And as the web is a news medium without deadlines or edition times, where most things can be published more or less instantly, most newspapers and magazines have a web-first policy, whereby much material is first published online. This means there is no such thing any longer as the weekly newspaper journalist, the monthly or weekly magazine journalist, or even the daily newspaper journalist. Today, almost all journalists must react immediately and craft their material first for the web, after which it is adapted for print, sometimes by the reporter, sometimes by sub-editors or online production staff, depending on the set-up.

We can publish before, during and after an event, using the medium – or combination of media – that is appropriate at each point in the life cycle of any given story.

So, we can:

- Tell them it's going to happen
- Tell them it's happening
- Tell them it's happened.

And, because reporting is a conversation, we can get our audience's feedback at every point along the way. If we listen to that feedback we often find that it shapes how our reporting develops. But more on that as we go.

Let's take those three points in the life cycle of a story, and think about what we can do when.

### *When we know it's going to happen*

We can preview events. Tell the audience what is going to happen, and when, and what the likely outcome will be. Of course, some of this will be speculative. Our audience will have views on how things are likely to turn out.

You hear such previewing a good deal on some breakfast radio and TV shows. They see their early morning role as what they like to call setting the agenda. So, if the government is to make an important announcement during the day, they will focus on what the substance of the announcement is likely to be. They will have experts and both in-house and outside commentators chewing over what they expect to happen.

You get stories that begin: "Figures to be released later today are expected to show . . ." or "A further slump in retail sales is expected to be revealed this morning when . . ."

Many media-savvy organisations are aware of this and cooperate with it. Government ministers will talk about why they are going to announce a new policy, even if they won't go into too many details on the substance of that new policy. Organisations that have a report published later that day will give a preview of its findings. A prominent person who is to make an important speech will release the text in advance.

Such previewing is an important function of multimedia journalism. It's all part of the conversation we are having with our audience. The sort of news coverage in which we only reported on something when it had happened is part of the old attitude to news; the 'here is the news' approach that is no longer appropriate.

As multimedia journalists we have great opportunities for previewing events. We can offer:

- Preview pieces in print and online
- Tips, steers and gossip in our blogs
- Audio and video packages that set the scene by featuring those likely to be affected by, or with something to say about, the story that will break later.

In all of the above we can offer the facts as we know them, a range of comment and opinion, and invite our audience to comment on what is to happen and take part in polls and other interaction.

## *While it's happening*

Once, only TV and radio journalists could go live to an event as it happened. Now any multimedia journalist can. While a story is breaking our role is clear: first and foremost, we must deliver the facts, as quickly and directly as we can. But almost the instant it becomes clear that something has happened, then the how and why it has happened, and most importantly the 'what this means to you', must also be tackled. That involves opinion, comment and analysis.

We can cover events as they happen with:

- A live video stream to our website
- Live audio

- Twitter, SMS or news-ticker text updates
- Instant text reporting, comment and analysis.

## *Once it's happened*

Once an event is over, analysis, meaning and context are needed in our reporting.

### questions

If you think back to Chapter One and the quiz we did on what medium is best for a range of stories, can you remember what we said was best for understanding complex facts and for remembering them? Don't read on until you have thought about this.

Text is best for complex, fact-packed analysis and grasping the meaning of detailed information. Many publishers use this as the foundation of the distinction between the online and print versions of their publications. They use the web for breaking news and the newspaper or magazine for analysis.

This makes sense because, if we have done our jobs properly, people already know what the news is when they pick up our print publication. So if we give them it again we have to go far beyond the facts or they will stop reading us. A former editor of the *Independent* described his paper as a viewspaper rather than a newspaper. If that's true for a daily publication, it's even truer of a weekly magazine, let alone a monthly.

But the web also has a key function here. It is a good place for grouping a range of stories about a particular subject. We can create a special area of the site where we offer an essential run-down of a topic – an election, a financial crisis or a major event such as the Olympics. If we organise it properly, readers can quickly find the detailed information they need. Such areas used to be known as micro sites, now the term is topic pages.

So, after the event we can publish:

- Analysis and comment in our print publication or on our website
- The result of invitations to readers to comment on, discuss or vote on the story
- Comment on our blogs
- Discussions with experts via video or audio podcasts
- A special area on the website where extensive coverage of a long-running event is grouped together.

We can also point readers to a digest of our own and other people's news and comment through email bulletins.

All of these opportunities to report can seem very daunting. They can make us wonder when on earth we will get the time to do it all. One key to being able to achieve all of the above is to make our reporting a by-product of our research and of our news gathering, because, with multimedia journalism, the process through which we do our jobs – the things we read, the people we speak to and the events we attend to ensure we are fully briefed – can be reported on along the way to the finished story. We aren't just gathering material to use later, when all is done and dusted. We are publishing at numerous points during the life cycle of a story.

**on the website**

- **Watch a video in which the head of digital content at a major publisher explains his approach to the story cycle and multimedia reporting**
- **Get involved in the discussion of what news is: add your comments and have your say.**

6B2

## Story cycle 1: research as reporting

We're going to run through the story cycle in more detail now, and use plenty of illustrations.

Let's say you cover a beat. It doesn't matter if it's a geographic beat for a local paper or a subject beat for a B2B magazine. It might be:

- Health
- Politics
- Crime
- Or any number of other things.

In any of these areas there are valuable sources of material that you need to monitor to ensure you can cover your beat effectively.

These sources will include:

- News alerts from organisations, which you may well access through RSS feeds. These are official news sources
- Tweets on Twitter. You can join an informal network of like-minded people who post tweets on subjects that interest them, as they occur to them

- Blogs from those who work in, cover or otherwise have knowledge of a particular area or subject. These can include insights, rants and gems of news, and the bloggers are like contacts: they can give you tips. Tweets and blogs are unofficial sources
- Groups on social networking sites such as Facebook – a mix of official or unofficial sites where those with an interest in a subject or who work in a particular area, industry, factory, hospital or whatever share views and information.

Say you are covering health – it doesn't matter whether you do that nationally for a B2B or general interest publication or locally for a regional newspaper, website or magazine – here's how such sources can help you.

## *News alerts and RSS feeds*

Any search done through Google News, Google Blog Search or Google Groups will give you the option to sign up to email alerts for a particular search term or, for the first two, an RSS feed.

You'll want to sign up to alerts that will bring you the latest health news, refined through the terms you specify for a particular geographic area or subdivision of medicine.

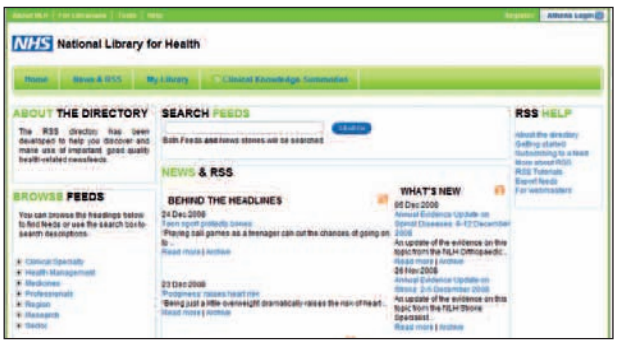
You can set up several alerts, each with search terms that fit areas you cover.

If you do this on Google your alerts are grouped on a page for you and you can manage, amend and add to them as you wish.

You can choose how they are delivered as well – either via email at intervals you specify or via a feed as they happen.

If you cover health, you'll want the main RSS feeds from the NHS. This link takes you to an NHS library of useful links in the area of health (you'll also find all links on the website):

**http://www.library.nhs.uk/rss/**



It also offers you the option of browsing a range of RSS feeds by category.

One of the available categories gives regional feeds. You can pick the regions that are important to you. You can also browse by, for example, clinical specialism. If you are working on a B2B health magazine and focus on any of several dozen specialisms, from blood disorders to women's health, then there are specific RSS feeds that will be of value to you.

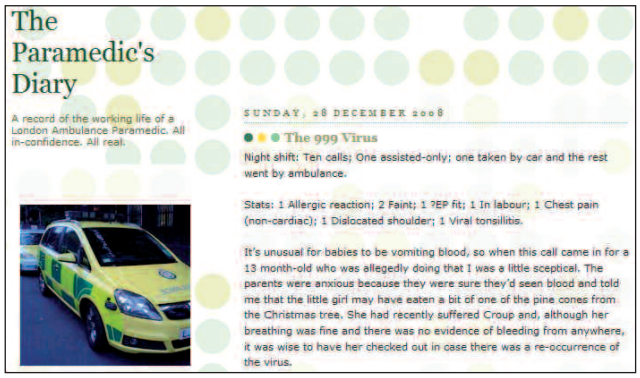
That's great for official sources of information, but you also want the unofficial ones. You want the leaks, the unofficial tips, the gossip, the rows and the scandals. As we said in the last section, these are some of the things that you get from your contacts. But the web gives us another way of getting this information.

If you are covering the ambulance service, for example, as part of your beat, you'd love to have an outspoken contact who worked in the service. You'd want to know what was going on, what the impact of government initiatives, policies, cost-cutting or efficiency measures was. That's just the sort of thing that articulate, concerned – possibly disaffected – ambulance staff might blog about. You need to find those blogs. Here's one of them:

**http://randomreality.blogware.com/**

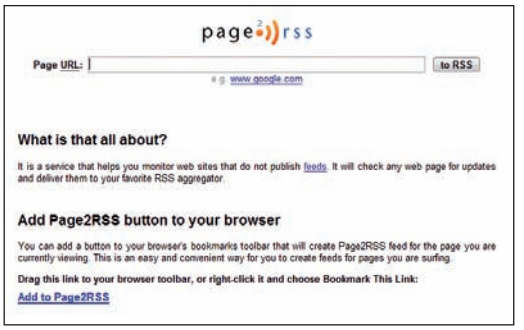
Many journalists follow that blog. The blogger is clearly articulate, informed and outspoken. Material appears on this blog which makes great stories. And it has an RSS feed. From it you can find other useful blogs, such as one from a paramedic:

**http://theparamedicsdiary.blogspot.com/**

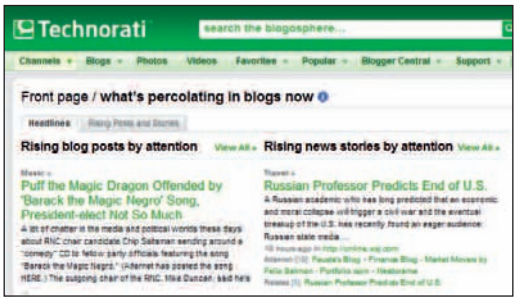

The Paramedic's Diary
A record of the working life of a London Ambulance Paramedic. All in-confidence. All real.
SUNDAY, 28 DECEMBER 2008
The 999 Virus
Night shift: Ten calls; One assisted-only; one taken by car and the rest went by ambulance.
Stats: 1 Allergic reaction; 2 Faint; 1 ?EP fit; 1 In labour; 1 Chest pain (non-cardiac); 1 Dislocated shoulder; 1 Viral tonsillitis.
It's unusual for babies to be vomiting blood, so when this call came in for a 13 month-old who was allegedly doing that I was a little sceptical. The parents were anxious because they were sure they'd seen blood and told me that the little girl may have eaten a bit of one of the pine cones from the Christmas tree. She had recently suffered Croup and, although her breathing was fine and there was no evidence of bleeding from anywhere, it was wise to have her checked out in case there was a re-occurrence of the virus.

Some feed readers, such as Google's, help you find other useful sources by comparing your interests with the feeds of users similar to you, and offering them as recommendations. Click on the word **Discover** in the middle of the panel on the left of the Google RSS page and a list of ideas comes up.

Not all websites and blogs offer feeds. If you come across one that doesn't, but which you'd like to monitor, you can create a feed from it by going to a site such as page2rss (**http://page2rss.com/**) and setting one up. It will check the site you like for updates and, when it finds them, add them to your feed reader.


page2rss
Page URL:
to RSS
e.g. www.google.com
What is that all about?
It is a service that helps you monitor web sites that do not publish feeds. It will check any web page for updates and deliver them to your favorite RSS aggregator.
Add Page2RSS button to your browser
You can add a button to your browser's bookmarks toolbar that will create Page2RSS feed for the page you are currently viewing. This is an easy and convenient way for you to create feeds for pages you are surfing.
Drag this link to your browser toolbar, or right-click it and choose Bookmark This Link:
Add to Page2RSS

Another is Technorati (**http://technorati.com/**).




Technorati offers a good way to find blogs in your area of interest. You can search for posts and blogs containing particular key words and subscribe – via RSS – to those that interest you. Or you can add them to a favourites list in Technorati.

A UK health journalist would start by searching for blogs with the acronym NHS in them. There will be a lot of them, but click on a promising one and you will find the tags that the author has assigned to it. Those tags are good clues to other search terms that will return more clearly targeted results.

With a certain amount of trial and error you can build up a great set of information sources.

You'll notice a little button with the word **Authority** on it beside the items your search returns. This is a guide to how popular – and perhaps reliable – the site is. As Technocrati explains: "Authority is the number of blogs linking to a website in the last six months. The higher the number, the more Technorati Authority the blog has." There is also a note of the number of people who have "faved" the blog.

On the NHS search I have just made, NHS Blog Doctor was the top result:

**http://nhsblogdoc.blogspot.com**

- Authority: 287
- 31 fans.

Click through to it and you find this list of tags that the author has attached to it:

1 Health
2 Humour
3 Economics
4 UK
5 Hospitals
6 Health Economics
7 GP
8 Specialists
9 Surgeons
10 NHS
11 Nurses
12 Psychiatrists
13 Private health insurance
14 Physician
15 Family doctor
16 Mammography
17 Social workers
18 Dumbing down the health service
19 Radiologists
20 CPNs.

Depending on the areas of health you are interested in, you could use these tags in additional searches. As you find additional blogs that serve you well, you will find more tags and more opportunities to refine your search and pinpoint the really useful sources of news, gossip and comment.

## *Monitoring news sources*

twitter
Select Language
What is Twitter?
What?
Please sign in:
Twitter is a service for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question: What are you doing?
Get Started—Join!

Twitter describes itself as "a service for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question: **What are you doing?**"

For our journalistic purposes, we could change that question to: what is happening?

It's also known as a micro-blogging site. You get 140 characters per message, so have to keep things tight. We can use it in our journalistic research, by subscribing to or following people whose messages – tweets, in Twitter parlance – interest us. We can get these tweets on our mobile phone or on the web.

And you can publish your own tweets on your website or blog – transmitting them to it from your mobile phone if you are away from the office. Those who follow your tweets will get those messages on their mobiles, but they can also get them on your site or blog.

So, if we use it as a journalistic tool, Twitter gives us a free and easy way to practise writing breaking-news headlines in the style of the news tickers that you see on websites. If you have this facility on the site at your course centre you might think you don't need this, but I'd suggest it's a great thing to add to your personal blog in any case, and to get used to breaking news via this means.

Here is a link that takes you to a post that explains in more detail how journalists can use Twitter:

**http://www.contentious.com/2008/10/21/twitter-basics-for-journalists-recovering-journos/**

As with other research resources, you have to spend some time finding the Twitterers that you want to follow. You can search on the Twitter site, using key words. You can also use services such as Twubble:

**http://crazybob.org/twubble/**

and Twits Like Me:

**http://www.chrisfinke.com/twitslikeme/**

which recommend Twitterers based on your friends and interests. For this to work you need to have registered with your correct name, not an alias, and to have filled in the mini biog with essential words that describe you and/or your interests.

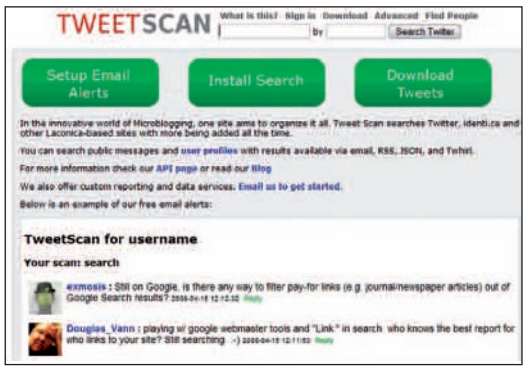
You can use Twitterlocal:

**http://www.twitterlocal.net/**

to find feeds through locations. You type in a place – it can be a postcode or something broader – and the radius from that point you want to receive tweets from. You can generate an RSS feed of these tweets and add it to your reader.

At Tweetscan:

**http://tweetscan.com/alerts.php**


TWEETSCAN
What is this? Sign in Download Advanced Find People
Search Twitter
Setup Email Alerts
Install Search
Download Tweets
In the innovative world of Microblogging, one site aims to organize it all. Tweet Scan searches Twitter, identi.ca and other Laconica-based sites with more being added all the time.
You can search public messages and user profiles with results available via email, RSS, JSON, and Twhirl.
For more information check our API page or read our Blog
We also offer custom reporting and data services. Email us to get started.
Below is an example of our free email alerts:
TweetScan for username
Your scan: search
exmosis : Still on Google, is there any way to filter pay-for links (e.g. journal/newspaper articles) out of Google Search results?
Douglas_Vann : playing w/ google webmaster tools and "Link" in search who knows the best report for who links to your site? Still searching :-)

you can search by person, location or key words. So if there is an event coming up that you need to cover, you can set up a feed on the topic and get tweets on the subject as they are posted.

## *Social bookmarking*

With so many sources of information, you need to have them organised or you'll get swamped. That's where a bookmarking site such as Delicious comes in. To quote it, this "is a social bookmarking service that allows you to tag, save, manage and share web pages all in one place. With emphasis on the power of the community, Delicious greatly improves how people discover, remember and share on the internet."

As your bookmarks are stored in your account on the Delicious site, you can get to them from any computer – not just the one you stored the bookmark on originally.

You can also share bookmarks and let others share yours. That's where the social side comes in. As you find interesting users on Delicious, with useful bookmarks, you can use subscriptions and network features to keep track of them, and they can keep track of you. You're now part of a community with common interests and have the potential to become an authority within that community. And that's one thing we journalists need to become if we expect people to read us.

You can also see how popular particular bookmarks are with Delicious users. This is another great way of identifying sources of information in the areas you are covering as a journalist. Popular bookmarks can often mean good bookmarks. Browse using key words that identify your areas of interest and you will find bookmarks that are useful to you. You can subscribe to feeds of key words in the subjects and/or places you cover.

**on the website**

- Watch a video explaining how this works.

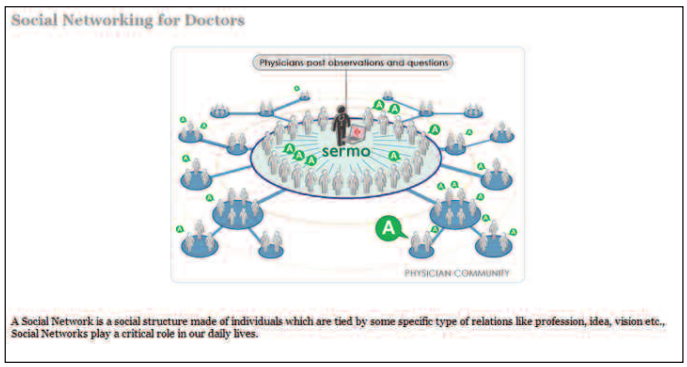
## *Social networks*

Most people subscribe to one or more social networks – Facebook is the best known but there are plenty of others. Some are general, others are specific.

Continuing our medical journalism theme, here is a blog which introduces a number of social networks specifically for doctors:

**http://blog.karuturi.org/2007/06/social-networking-for-doctors.html**

and it uses this illustration to explain what it is designed to do:


Social Networking for Doctors
Physicians post observations and questions
sermo
PHYSICIAN COMMUNITY
A Social Network is a social structure made of individuals which are tied by some specific type of relations like profession, idea, vision etc., Social Networks play a critical role in our daily lives.

You will also find social networks for teachers, lawyers, police officers – all sorts of networks for just about any professional group.

6B3

## Story cycle 2: publishing before the event

So how do we turn all of the monitoring we have done into material we can publish? We do it by making some of our reporting a by-product of that monitoring. You often see this done on blogs and in email bulletins. We can round up news alerts, stories that will develop during the day, or comment.

Roy Greenslade makes one of his daily *Guardian* blog posts at:

**http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/greenslade**

a round-up of what commentators across the media are saying about the stories of the day. He does it in association with media-analysis firm Editorial Intelligence:

**http://www.editorialintelligence.com/**

guardian.co.uk
Search
News Sport Comment Culture Business Money Life & style Travel Environment
News Media Greenslade Organ Grinder Media Monkey PDA PaidContent:UK
GREENSLADE
BLOG

Tuesday December 23 2008

What the commentators say today ...

Posted by Roy Greenslade 11.58 GMT

In association with media analysis firm Editorial Intelligence

**BOB QUICK:** The *Daily Mail*'s **Peter Oborne** says a senior police officer should exhibit sound judgment, coolness under pressure, good intuition, total discretion, and be able to sift through evidence without leaping to conclusions. There is no evidence that Bob Quick possesses a single one of these vital characteristics. **Richard Littlejohn** is critical of Quick and argues that if anyone is guilty of intimidation it's Quick himself. In *The Times*, **Andy Hayman**, a former Met assistant commissioner, says the force is finding it almost impossible to detach itself from party politics as it investigates allegations that go to the heart of the establishment. In *The Guardian*, **Tony Travers**, director of the Greater London group at the LSE, says Quick's ill-judged comments at the weekend highlights how the "bubbling war" between the Tories and the Met police is back.

**ECONOMY:** The *Daily Telegraph*'s **Tracy Corrigan** says the taxpayer has just won a reprieve as Jaguar Land Rover's Indian owner, Tata, has injected enough money into the ailing car company to save it from immediate cashflow problems. **Richard Fletcher** says it is significant

Here's an extract from Budget day, 23 April 2009:

**THE BUDGET, naturally enough, dominates all comment today . . .**

In *The Daily Telegraph*, **Benedict Brogan** says the budget tells us that Labour will fight the next election on an old-fashioned platform of wealth-destroying taxes and reckless spending. **Simon Heffer** believes the idiocy, bigotry, tribalism and sheer class hatred of the budget not only shows that the Labour party has no interest in "middle England", but that it seeks to persecute that constituency for its own political advantage. **Roger Bootle** believes the startling thing about the budget is that, gargantuan though the forecast borrowing numbers are, they are still likely to prove too low. **Damian Reece** says two words emerge from yesterday's budget speech: debt and tax. **Tom Stevenson** is not surprised Britain's hard-pressed savers have received little from the chancellor.

Our monitoring throws up new material – from news sites, RSS feeds, blogs, Twitter posts and the rest. We have to read those to know where we should go next in our reporting. But instead of waiting until we have some fresh reporting of our own to publish, we can begin by publishing our assessment of what others are saying.

If a major event has occurred in an area we cover, there will be a good deal of comment and analysis on it. We will probably have produced our own. We can summarise that comment and provide the essential links to it. If you remember, in Chapter One we looked at one approach to blogging where exactly this is done. The political blogger Iain Dale – among many others – offers his pick of the must-read news stories, comments and blogs:

**http://iaindale.blogspot.com/**

on the website

**How much should you share?**

A key question for journalists, who build their reputations on exclusives and getting information first, is how much you should share. Go to the website for a range of opinions on this.

6B4

## Story cycle 3: breaking news online – via news ticker, SMS and Twitter

Not all news can be anticipated. Stuff happens, and that's what a lot of the most exciting reporting is about.

As we work our way further into the story cycle we'll use as an illustration a story based on a serious train crash, and show how the theory of the story cycle applies to this story in practice.

Imagine you are a reporter on a daily newspaper with a multimedia website that covers the county of Berkshire, and follow the transport beat, among others. While at work you always have your RSS feeds open in a browser on your computer.

Among the many essential RSS feeds you have set up is one for British Transport Police. This one pings up at 7.30 p.m.:

**Train Derailed near Reading**

A major incident response has been launched following the derailment of the 18.35 Paddington to Penzance service in Sefton Peverill at 19.02.

You click on the headline to go through to the story on the British Transport Police (BTP) website, but it gives very few additional details. Just this:

**Initial reports from the scene are of many casualties. This incident is ongoing and updates will be posted on the Incident Updates page of the BTP website.**

You click on that link but find no more information. However, you find there the contact details of press officers. You immediately call and are told that a press officer is on his way to the scene but is not expected to arrive for another 30 minutes. They do, however, tell you that it is feared there are some fatalities among the casualties.

You need to publish something fast.

## questions

From what we have covered above, what do you think you will publish and how? Don't read on until you have thought about it.

You tell the duty news editor and he asks for a breaking-news ticker line to go up immediately. You have a 70-character limit. You write:

**Passengers feared dead as express train is derailed near Reading**

On Twitter you have twice the space so you repeat this line but add a second sentence:

**Many dozens of casualties reported in Sefton Peverill crash**

Your readers who have signed up to your SMS or Twitter feed will get this news on their mobiles, or on the Twitter site.

6B5

## Story cycle 4: reporting live

We have various tools at our disposal for live reporting:

- We can use Twitter, which, as we mentioned before, is both a research and a live publishing tool
- We can stream live video to our website
- We can send live text reports to our website.

These tools look likely to dominate the coverage of really big stories in which many people are caught up. And it won't be just – or even mainly – professional journalists who are using them.

### *How major stories are covered*

Here is an analysis, by the American journalism teacher Mindy McAdams, of how major news is often disseminated, written at the time of the terrorist attacks on Mumbai in 2008:

1. Breaking news will be online before it's on television.
2. Breaking news – especially disasters and attacks in the middle of a city – will be covered first by non-journalists.
3. The non-journalists will continue providing new information even after the trained journalists arrive on the scene.
4. Mobile phones will be the primary reporting tool at first, and possibly for hours.
5. Mobile phones that can use a wireless Internet connection in addition to a cellular phone network are a more versatile reporting tool than a phone alone.
6. Still photos, transmitted by citizens on the ground, will tell more than most videos.
7. The right video will get so many views your server might crash (although I'm not aware of this happening with any videos from Mumbai).
8. Live streaming video becomes a user magnet during a crisis.
9. Your print reporters need to know how to dictate over the phone. If they can get a line to the newsroom, it might be necessary.
10. Your web team must be prepared for this kind of crisis reporting.

The link is also online:

**http://mindymcadams.com/tojou/2008/twitter-mumbai-and-10-facts-about-journalism-now/**

Twitter has become a powerful breaking-news tool when there is a major news story that is hard to cover with conventional reporting.

**on the website**

- **Find a range of recent and major stories that have broken on Twitter and where Twitter has been a key reporting tool.**

## *Covering a murder trial live*

Multimedia technology is also transforming the ways more straightforward stories are being published. Take court reporting, for example. We'll look at this area of reporting in detail later in this chapter, but for now let's look at a pioneering initiative from Liverpool. In 2008 the killer of Rhys Jones, an 11-year-old boy shot dead when caught up in gang violence, was tried in the city. This was a huge story in Liverpool. The level of interest justified very intensive coverage. It warranted live reporting, but you can't take a video camera into court. Instead, the *Liverpool Post and Echo* used Cover It Live, software that is embedded into a website and allows reporters to blog straight into the site. Video can also be embedded in it, so when the jury was shown footage of the shooting, that could also be published. The reporter in court could give very detailed written coverage and post it as it was happening. The interface looked like this:

Here's the page on which they blogged live from court using Cover It Live:

**http://www.liverpooldailypost.co.uk/liverpool-news/ rhys-jones/rhys-jones-trial-live/**

Find out more about Cover It Live here:

**http://www.coveritlive.com/**

**on the website**

- See *Liverpool Post* videos on the Rhys Jones trial online.

## *My day at Kew*

Here's a personal example of how much material can be generated when we have multimedia reporting at our disposal.

I was invited to Kew Gardens for a press day on which we would meet a range of curators, get tours of the gardens, archives, library and other things. I was the only journalist with a video camera and one of the few with a stills camera.

There were reporters and features writers from a range of publications. Most were there to write one piece – sometimes just a quick news story, others a feature, others to gain background information about the range of events Kew had planned for its 250th anniversary.

We had a fascinating day, and met half a dozen senior Kew curators who gave us a wealth of information on plant conservation and all sorts of other things.

Because I had unlimited space on my specialist consumer web magazine, *Classic Gardening*, there was no limit on what I could produce. So I streamed three live videos during our tour, and took hundreds of stills and filled a notebook with quotes.

JOIN US FOR A GUIDED TOUR OF KEW GARDENS

Next year the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew celebrates its 250th anniversary.
Recently, I spent a fascinating day enjoying a behind-the-scenes tour of just about every aspect of the place, from the remarkable archives to the new treetop walkway and the hundreds of plants rescued from extinction. Most fascinating of all, I learned what Kew plans to do in the next 250 years.
I hope you enjoy the videos, slide shows and words that cover that day. I'll be adding to this posting over the next few days, and as I do the links below will go live.

**Kew: The last 250 years**
The herbarium and library
Text and pictures
Slide show

**Aboard the Kew Explorer**
A tour around the 132 hectare grounds
This is a Qik video that I streamed live during the trip

**Up in the tree tops**
A tour of the 18m high Rhizotron and Xstrata Treetop Walkway with Tony Kirkham, head of the arboretum
Text and pictures
Slide show
This is a video I streamed live during the trip

I'm not suggesting in any way I was cleverer than the other journalists there, but I was able to make the day much more productive than the old media approach of getting one piece and putting it together at leisure. I predict it will become increasingly common for journalists, whoever they work for, to be expected to cover stories highly intensively. And to do that, they will need all the multimedia skills we are covering in this book.

### *Back to our train crash story*

Let's pursue our train crash story and see how it can be reported live using multimedia skills and resources. There are several checks to be made to try to get more information, but it is also important to get to the scene.

The news editor tells you to set off immediately, while the other late-duty reporter hits the phones. You are sent with a photographer who has video skills. But you also take your video-enabled mobile phone, from which you can stream live video to your website and post text to Twitter. Those posts will go as SMS messages to readers who subscribe to your feed, and will also appear on your website's home page.

When you get to Sefton Peverill you find total devastation. You are kept at a distance from the level crossing that passes through the village. Traffic is backed up but you and the photographer abandon your car and run down to the scene. Under the lights that illuminate the crossing you can see a certain amount of damage but there is no sign of the train. The photographer begins videoing all that he can, but has no means of transmitting it live. Instead, he shoots in two- or three-minute bursts, loads it onto his laptop and transmits the footage wirelessly back to the office, where it can be built into video packages.

You get your phone out and press the **Qik** button you have installed, which means you are immediately streaming live video to your website. You can also set it up on a tripod and do a quick piece to camera, with your unscripted first impressions of the scene.

Thinking of audio, you could also do a phone conversation with the office that could be broadcast live and then edited into a package with the footage you have sent and anything else that becomes available.

6B6

## Story cycle 5: first text story on the website

Let's stick with the train crash example for now as we move on through the story cycle.

As you were leaving with the photographer, the other reporter was gathering some more information, and is writing a short news item that will lead your website. She has discovered this:

**The ambulance service press office says, "There have been around 150 casualties, some of whom are fatalities. Exact numbers are not known at this time."**

## questions

Can you work out what her new head and sell will be, plus the next couple of pars? Write yours, and don't read on until you have done so.

She writes this head and sell:

**Deaths and 150 injuries in Berkshire train crash**

**An unknown number of passengers are dead and 150 injured in an express train crash near Reading just after 7 p.m. *More* . . .**

**The 6.35 Paddington to Penzance service was derailed in the village of Sefton Peverill at 7.02 this evening.**

**A spokesman for the Royal Berkshire Ambulance Service said, "There have been around 150 casualties and a number are fatalities. Exact numbers are not known."**

**British Transport Police said a "major incident response" has been launched.**

## questions

What does she do next? Don't read on until you have decided.

She then hits the phones to find out more, putting in calls to local hospitals, county police and contacts in the village where the crash occurred.

### *Meanwhile, at the scene of the crash . . .*

You grab a word with a police officer who says he can't tell you anything officially but says off the record that the train appears to have hit a car on the level crossing.

## questions

What do you do with this information? Don't read on until you have decided.

You Twitter:

> **Berkshire rail crash: train hit car on level crossing before being derailed, it is believed.**

You also phone this news through to the news desk. They are hearing the same about the cause and, from the ambulance service, that five victims are dead.

6B7

## Story cycle 6: updating story on the web

## questions

How do you think the office-based reporter updates the web story? Don't read on until you have written your version.

She puts together a second web story leading on this angle:

> **5 killed and 150 injured in Berkshire train crash**
>
> **Five passengers are dead and 150 injured after an express train hit a car on a level crossing near Reading.**
>
> **The 6.35 Paddington to Penzance service was derailed in the collision in the village of Sefton Peverill at 7.02.**

Meanwhile, you get on with your reporting.

To one side of the crossing is a pub, and there is a lot of activity there. There are also a number of police vehicles and ambulances. You overhear one man talking on his mobile. He looks shocked and appears from what he is saying to have witnessed the crash. You introduce yourself as a reporter, apologising for interrupting, and ask if he can tell you what he saw. He agrees. He tells you his name is Darren Chambers of Star Road, Caversham, Reading, and that he is an estate agent.

You start live videoing, turning the camera to your face as you introduce the eyewitness, then switching it to him. He says:

**I was driving up to the crossing and the lights were flashing red and the barriers were down. As I got there I saw that there was a car actually on the tracks, right in the path of the train.**

**I got out of my car and ran up to the barrier and there was an emergency phone to one side. I picked it up, but just as I did I heard the train approaching and I just dived to one side. The train driver just had no chance even to brake as he hit the car and there was a horrible noise of tearing metal.**

You ask if there was anyone in the car and he says:

**There was a man in the driver's seat, I shouted but I don't know if he was trying to start his engine or what. I was sure he'd try to get out but he didn't – who knows if he was just terrified.**

This is really crucial information and you want to know more but two police officers arrive and take the man away to be interviewed.

## questions

Write an update on the stories that have already been published to the web, including some of the quotes above. Don't read on until you have completed your story.

Here is our suggestion for how the next web story could be written:

A witness of the fatal Sefton Peverill train crash has given a dramatic account of the moment of impact.

Darren Chambers of Star Road, Caversham, Reading, was drawing up to the unmanned level crossing in the Berkshire village when he saw a car stopped on the crossing in the path of the oncoming express.

This effectively becomes a follow-up story, despite the short time that has elapsed since it first broke, so we need to give the key background information high up, and that is what follows:

Five passengers were killed and 150 injured in the crash, which happened just after 7 p.m. and involved the 6.35 service from Paddington to Penzance.

Mr Chambers said: "The lights were flashing red and the barriers were down. As I got there I saw that there was a car actually on the tracks, right in the path of the train.

"I got out of my car and ran up to the barrier and there was an emergency phone to one side. I picked it up but just as I did I heard the train approaching and I just dived to one side. The train driver just had no chance even to brake as he hit the car and there was a horrible noise of tearing metal.

"There was a man in the driver's seat, I shouted but I don't know if he was trying to start his engine or what. I was sure he'd try to get out but he didn't – who knows if he was just terrified."

Emergency services are at the scene.

## *Back in the office*

At the office they have seen your video and transcribed the quotes to add into their text news story, producing something similar to the report above. They grab a still of the witness. Video of the wrecked train is coming from the photographer and the rescue activity, and this is turned into a package together with clips from the interview you streamed live.

By now the news editor has all the reporters alerted. Some are coming to the scene, one to the hospital where the injured are being taken, a couple back to the office to help with the phoning.

Next day's print edition will have many pages devoted to the crash and a special early morning edition will be on the streets at 6.30 a.m. The chief sub is briefed to work on that, and he or she and the other subs begin building up an account of the crash in text and pictures. A train crash logo is put together and used on the website to promote the newspaper coverage.

You continue to gather material at the scene. You can't get close enough to see the crash site – the train had travelled 500 yards before it toppled down an embankment into fields.

The walking wounded are being taken to that pub you spotted to one side of the level crossing. You manage to get in and do some interviews. You stream live videos back which are also knitted into video packages together with material from the photographer, who has managed to get to a position where, with full zoom, he can see the crashed train under floodlights set up by rescuers.

He has footage of the wounded being stretchered to ambulances, and of the uninjured and those with minor injuries being led back along the tracks to the village.

Here is what you get in the pub. You video stream your interviews and they are edited into a package back at the office. Your quotes are transcribed and turned into a text report, which reads like this:

**John Jones, landlord at the Welcome Inn pub, which is a 10-minute walk from the site of the crash, said: "We are full of injured and bruised passengers.**

**"They are all looking quite shocked. We are trying to help them as best we can. I think a couple of them ordered a stiff drink to calm the nerves, but most are just drinking tea and coffee until emergency workers have assessed their injuries."**

**Samantha Mathias, a student, said: "It was terrifying. I thought I was going to die. All I could feel was my body being thrown, then people on top of me. After the crash, passengers used light from their mobile phones and glow sticks from bonfire night celebrations to light their way off the train and to find the injured."**

**Jason Haynes, a passenger in the rear of the train, said: "There was a lot of shuddering, then we suddenly realised something was going on. I braced myself between the aisles, then the train turned on its side at the last moment.**

**"After getting out of the carriage, I saw other carriages that looked the worse for wear. The one in front of mine remained upright but I could see that the one after that was at right angles to the track. There were a lot of carriages strewn all over the place. From my carriage I heard no one say they had been injured. The train was pretty full.**

**"Initially, the lights had gone out and people were searching for the emergency light. There was a little bit of panic.**

"Eventually, somebody broke a window. There were hammers for emergencies like this. We then all moved down and went through the rear of the carriage.

"It was difficult to move because the carriage was at a 45 degree angle."

## questions

There is a lot of material available now. The reporter back at the office has been trying to get the names of the dead, but been told no details will be released until next of kin have been informed. Turn what you now know into a 500-word story for the web. Don't read on until you have written your version. By the way, you don't have to rewrite what you have already published – just cut and paste into your new version – unless more interesting and important things make that necessary.

Do bear in mind there are various aspects now to the story, and a range of audio and video elements. Let's make sure we produce a truly multimedia report.

Here's our suggestion for how a new version could be written:

A witness of the fatal Sefton Peverill train crash has given a dramatic account of the moment of impact.

Darren Chambers of Star Road, Caversham, Reading, was drawing up to the unmanned level crossing in the Berkshire village when he saw a car stopped on the crossing in the path of the oncoming express.

Five passengers were killed and 150 injured in the crash, which happened just after 7 p.m. and involved the 6.35 Paddington to Penzance service. Police are not releasing the names of the dead until families have been informed.

Mr Chambers said: "The lights were flashing red and the barriers were down. As I got there I saw that there was a car actually on the tracks, right in the path of the train.

"I got out of my car and ran up to the barrier and there was an emergency phone to one side. I picked it up but just as I did I heard the train approaching and dived to one side. The train driver just had no chance even to brake as he hit the car and there was a horrible noise of tearing metal.

"There was a man in the driver's seat. I shouted but I don't know if he was trying to start his engine or what. I was sure he'd try to get out but he didn't – who knows if he was just terrified."

Ambulance, fire and police services are at the scene in force. The seriously injured are being stretchered to a fleet of ambulances and ferried to the County General Hospital, while the walking wounded are being treated in the Welcome Inn pub in the village.

John Jones, landlord at the Welcome Inn, which is a 10-minute walk from the site of the crash, said: "We are full of injured and bruised passengers.

"They are all looking quite shocked. We are trying to help them as best we can. I think a couple of them ordered a stiff drink to calm the nerves, but most are just drinking tea and coffee until emergency workers have assessed their injuries."

Samantha Mathias, a student, said: "It was terrifying. I thought I was going to die. All I could feel was my body being thrown, then people on top of me. After the crash, passengers used light from their mobile phones and glow sticks from bonfire night celebrations to light their way off the train and to find the injured."

Jason Haynes, a passenger in the rear of the train, said: "There was a lot of shuddering, then we suddenly realised something was going on. I braced myself between the aisles, then the train turned on its side at the last moment.

"The lights had gone out and people were searching for the emergency light. There was a little bit of panic.

"Eventually, somebody broke a window. There were hammers for emergencies like this. We then all moved down and went through the rear of the carriage.

"There were a lot of carriages strewn all over the place."

6B8

## Story cycle 7: adding feedback from readers

We are going to cover what is known as user-generated content in detail in Chapter Seven. For now, let's look briefly at how it can be incorporated into the story we are reporting.

By now many readers have heard about the story and are following it on your website. Through the comment facility they are responding to your stories. Among the responses there is information from eyewitnesses.

The web team add a button on the home page, and other screens about the crash, inviting readers to tell you what they have seen. There is also an invitation to send in photographs and video, but what you are sent does not add to the material you and the photographer have gathered.

The comments are scanned and the best ones added to the main reports.

Here are a couple of the best:

**"I was upstairs drawing the curtains and saw the car stop there. It was a silver Mazda and the guy in it was just sat there as the barriers came down. He didn't make any effort to move the car that I could see." – Linda Lambert**

**"These unmanned level crossings are a liability. It's not the first time there's been an accident in Berkshire, and it won't be the last."**

The first comment adds materially to our knowledge of how the crash happened. The second raises a question that is worth pursuing. An archive check will tell us if this is true – if we don't know already.

It's important that we use the best comments from readers in our reporting, not simply leave relevant comments languishing among other comments that may add little or nothing to the wider audience's understanding of events. We'll look at this point in much more detail in Chapter Seven.

## questions

How would you add the first quote into your reporting? Don't read on until you have rewritten your first six pars or so.

Here's our suggestion:

Witnesses of the fatal Sefton Peverill train crash have given dramatic accounts of the moment of impact.

Linda Lambert, who lives in the village, saw the car that caused the crash stop on the unmanned level crossing. "The guy in it just sat there as the barriers came down. He didn't make any effort to move the car that I could see."

Darren Chambers of Star Road, Caversham, Reading, drove up just before the moment of impact.

He said: "The lights were flashing red and the barriers were down. I got out of my car and ran up to the barrier and there was an emergency phone to one side. I picked it up but just as I did I heard the train approaching and dived to one side. The train driver just had no chance even to brake as he hit the car and there was a horrible noise of tearing metal.

"There was a man in the driver's seat. I shouted but I don't know if he was trying to start his engine or what. I was sure he'd try to get out but he didn't – who knows if he was just terrified."

Five were killed and 150 injured in the crash, which happened just after 7 p.m. and involved the 6.35 Paddington to Penzance service. Police are not releasing the names of the dead until families have been informed.

6B9

## Story cycle 8: developing the story for web and print

It's time to think about how to structure the coverage in print and online.

## questions

It's getting late and it will be hard to follow up the story until the morning, but there are various angles to be explored as and when you can. What do you think they are? Don't read on until you have a list.

These angles need exploring:

- Identities of the dead
- Details of the injured – any seriously? Any potential further fatalities?
- Who was the car driver and why did he stop on the crossing?
- Disruption to rail travel
- Safety implications of the crash
- Details of the rescue operation.

### *In print: story for the first edition of the newspaper the next day*

For tomorrow morning's newspaper, several pages of coverage will be put together. Much of it can be drawn straight from the web text. The print edition differs from the web in that it is set in time – at least until a further edition can be printed – and, these days, newspapers keep their editions to a minimum to cut costs.

The main story on the crash needs to be a comprehensive one. It needs to be written in such a way that readers who come to the story fresh – not having followed it online or in other media – get the full picture clearly presented. This can easily be done by a sub-editor reworking the material filed for the web.

### *A web area that can be developed*

Online we need an area of the site where readers can find all elements of the train crash story – text, video, audio and stills. We need a good head and sell plus picture on the home page, and to offer hypertext links to key parts of the coverage. We also need a main index page, linked to from the head and sell and placed at level two in our site hierarchy. This page can offer links to all aspects of the story and is scalable – as we get more information and new aspects present themselves, we can add links to this page, and then slot in further screens at level three, as they are needed.

6B10

## Story cycle 9: refreshing the story regularly

Many websites have key points during the day when traffic peaks. It makes sense to publish new material to coincide with those peaks. They might be when users get to work and check the site, at lunchtime, before they go home in the evening and when they are browsing after their evening meal. Sites with an international appeal – and that can include local newspaper-based sites that are read by expats in Europe, Australia and elsewhere, or B2B sites that have a strong following in North America and Japan – will have a particular traffic pattern and should publish new material in accordance with it.

With our train crash story, this is such a big event locally, and is moving so fast, that we can go online as and when new information becomes available.

Next morning things move fast on all aspects of the story. Here, with timings, is when new information comes to you. Each time we get a new, key piece of information, we will need to update the website.

### questions

As each piece of information comes in, decide how it should be handled. You will want to use news-ticker lines and/or tweets to immediately get new information published, but what then? For instance, if you feel it means the main news story – the one readers see first online – needs rewriting or amending, do this. If you feel the material that comes in requires a separate story because it covers one specific aspect of the crash or its aftermath, write that new story. Decide whether a mention of it needs to be added to the main story, or whether you can best link to it from alongside the main story.

### *9 a.m.: disruption to rail travel*

Rail bosses have warned travellers to brace themselves for long delays and cancellations as engineers struggle to clear the wreckage of yesterday's crash from the main intercity route between London and the West Country. First Great Western advised travellers to check its website for further details. Network Rail warned that its engineers would be unable to assess the damage to the track until it has cleared the damaged train, which is likely to take until the middle of the week.

The line between Reading and Westbury is expected to be closed for much of the week. First Great Western said it would operate a special timetable:

- Trains between London and Somerset, Devon and Cornwall will use a diversionary route through Swindon and Bristol
- Some services between London and Cardiff will be cancelled
- Special buses will run from Reading to connect with trains at Didcot Parkway.

**questions**

How are you going to handle the travel aspect of the story? Don't read on until you have decided.

Our suggestion: we need a screen dedicated to travel. We can add bulleted hypertext links under the sell and one of them can link to full details of travel disruption.

## *10 a.m.: identities of the dead*

At a police press conference the names of the five dead are released. They were:

- Train driver Alan Jones, 38, of Ebbsfleet, Kent
- Eoin Foyle, 32, of Penzance
- Douglas Jenkins, 68, of Theale, Berkshire
- Sally Doyle, 8, of Reading (these two were grandfather and granddaughter)
- Shami Guptah, 27, of Bristol.

The car driver also died but his details are not being released. There will be a press conference later.

## *Details of the injured*

At the same press conference, a hospital spokesman gives details of those injured, including one who is in a critical condition, and of the hospital's emergency response.

Sixty-one patients were admitted to Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading after the rail crash on Saturday night, and 47 of these were discharged later that night.

Nine of the hospital's remaining 14 casualties have severe injuries, including cuts, broken bones and pelvic injuries.

Four were in a serious but stable condition and one man remained critically ill. Another patient was being treated yesterday in the intensive care unit of a nearby hospital.

Professor Alex Sharkey, chief executive of the Reading Hospitals NHS Trust, also spoke at the conference. She said it had been an emotional experience for everyone involved:

**We had a lot of tears earlier this morning.**

**The director who arranged the whole process and myself went around and saw the staff and all the patients and all the relatives who were still being dealt with. That actually went very well.**

You learn that the hospital's major incident procedure had been launched at 6.40 p.m. on Saturday when news of the crash came in, just two weeks after staff at the hospital rehearsed it.

Paying tribute to how staff had worked together, Prof Sharkey said: "We called in the people who were on call last night, that's 20-plus, but then other people – heads of department – came in and people rang in to say they were on standby if we wanted them. We were able to clear the hospital very quickly, and made 40 beds available."

## questions

How are you going to handle this information? How are you going to alter your main story? Are you going to add any additional subsidiary stories, linked to from the head and sell? Don't read on until you have decided.

Here's our suggestion: immediately get the names of the dead out – via Twitter and news ticker. Then a new web story needs to be written. The identities of the dead need to head things off.

## questions

Are any of them more relevant to you, as a local daily, than others?

The grandfather and granddaughter victims are both from Berkshire – Theale is on the outskirts of Reading.

So what are the head and sell going to be?

**Berkshire grandfather and granddaughter, 8, killed in train crash**

A Berkshire grandfather and his 8-year-old granddaughter were among the five people killed in last night's Reading train crash.

They were Douglas Jenkins, 68, of Theale, and Sally Doyle of Reading. The train driver, a passenger from Bristol, and the so-far-unnamed driver of the car that caused the crash were also killed.

The story would go on to give the rest of the known details about the dead, the injured and some information about the hospital emergency procedures.

### *Noon: car driver's identity released*

British Transport Police hold a press conference at which they give details of the driver of the car. Chief Inspector Cressida John says:

The driver of the car died in the incident. His name was Adriano Persano, a 42-year-old chef from Henley. He worked at the Best Eastern Hotel and lived in staff accommodation there.

Eyewitnesses saw his car, a silver Mazda 323, registration S203 WOA, driven on to the crossing while the red warning lights were flashing but before the barriers came down.

Investigations are ongoing to ascertain why Mr Persano's vehicle came to a halt on the crossing. We are following two lines of inquiry to seek to determine whether the car broke down and Mr Persano was unable to move it from the tracks, or whether he stopped there deliberately.

## questions

So what are the main head and sell now? Write yours before you read on.

Here is our suggestion:

**Suicidal driver theory in Berkshire train crash**

A suicidal driver may have caused last night's Reading train crash, in which a Berkshire grandfather and his 8-year-old granddaughter were killed.

Police named the driver of the car that caused the crash, in which five died, as Adriano Persano, a chef at the Best Eastern Hotel in Henley.

Chief Inspector Cressida John said a second theory is that his car may have broken down on the crossing and he was unable to escape in time.

## *User-generated content – what residents are saying*

UGC can be a key component in our reporting, and we'll look at how we get and use it in much more detail in Chapter Seven. For now, let's look at the contributions that are coming in on the train crash story and see what we can do with them.

Your communities editor (more on this role in Chapter Seven) is monitoring comment and forums on your site. There are comments from three people who say they knew the car driver, and one names his girlfriend, who, it is said, he recently broke up with. The communities editor sends private responses to the three and is able to follow up with phone interviews – which are also taped for a possible audio report.

From the girlfriend you get a photo of the dead man. She has a video of him on her mobile phone which she also lets you have.

There are also comments from Sefton Peverill residents. Overwhelmingly they say their village needs a tunnel or bridge to replace the unmanned level crossing they have. The communities editor adds an e-petition to your website, demanding the crossing be replaced. Other villages across the county with similar unmanned level crossings join in. You get several hundred signatures in 24 hours, which makes a further strand in the story.

## *3 p.m.: safety implications of the crash*

Several bodies are commenting on the crash, and the question of the safety of unmanned level crossings.

Bob Crow, the leader of the RMT rail union, demands that all level crossings on intercity lines be replaced with bridges or tunnels: "If we can spend millions of pounds building motorways," he says at a press conference, "I can't see why we shouldn't spend money on tunnels of just 50 or 60 yards."

Keith Norman, the acting general secretary of the train drivers' union Aslef, says: "Level crossings are a major site for deaths on the railway network. The technology exists to give train drivers advanced warning of blockages on the tracks."

Network Rail, which is responsible for the rail infrastructure, says its efforts to improve contact between signallers and train drivers had been hampered by opposition to the construction of radio masts by railway lines.

You put these comments to the Association of Train Operating Companies. Their press office comes back with the following:

**George Muir, director general of the Association of Train Operating Companies, said it could cost billions to make such changes and that the money would be better spent improving safety on Britain's roads.**

You get background on level crossings and accidents to flesh out this latest news. You discover the following:

- The accident is the first big train crash for nearly two years
- Less than 18 months ago three farm labourers were killed when their minibus was hit by a train at an unmarked level crossing in Worcestershire
- Network Rail revealed that there had been 96 collisions at level crossings over the past five years. There are a total of 7,900 level crossings.

**questions**

What are you going to do with this information?

The row over safety is a fresh one, but it is not as gripping for readers as the details of the crash and how it happened. It makes a good subsidiary on the web and could be linked to from a hypertext link beneath the main head and sell, and given its own level-three screen that is also linked to from the level-two main crash index page.

In next day's newspaper, the editor would need to make a judgement call on how much readers had picked up from the website and other media. He or she could make the suicidal driver theory the lead and the safety story the second lead. Or they might strive to keep an exclusive back. If you had the only talk with the dead chef's ex-girlfriend, and you were sure she would not talk to anyone else, that would make a powerful newspaper exclusive that could then be reported online.

## *5 p.m.: details of the rescue operation*

You are allowed to go to the crash scene together with one of the leaders of the rescue operation, to take photos and video. A temporary roadway has been laid across the fields to the scene and heavy lifting gear brought in to get the carriages on to trucks for removal.

Throughout today fire crews have worked at the scene, cutting through mangled metal and guiding hydraulic lifting gear into the area to begin raising the carriages. It will take three days to clear all the wreckage.

The print edition flags up strongly that there will be regular updates online as things develop.

### *And so it goes on*

You don't often get such a dramatic story, but when you do it's important to cover it in a systematic way. New angles, follow-ups and further information will keep coming over the next two or three days, and you can use your web and print editions to bring them swiftly and efficiently to your audience.

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## Developing your skills as an interviewer

You will need to do some interviewing for most of the stories you write. Almost from the first word of this book, interviewing was involved, but now we are going to take our first systematic look at interviewing technique. A further detailed look will follow in Chapter Twelve when we look at writing features.

Not all interviews are the same. The people you interview can be divided into three main categories:

- Well-known personalities
- Ordinary people, not usually in the news
- People speaking on behalf of organisations or firms.

Some interviews are arranged in advance, others just happen because an unexpected situation or opportunity arises to talk to someone relevant to a story you are writing.

Relatively few interviews are conducted face to face. Most are carried out either over the phone or via email.

Whatever the method you use to get to your interview, it is vital that you ask the right questions, in the right way, or you may not get the information you need.

### *Tips on interviewing*

As we've said already, the structure of an interview can be very different when you are writing a text report to when you are making a video.

Here are a few thoughts on how to ask your questions, whatever the medium:

- Avoid questions that produce a yes/no answer. "Were you frightened?" is a bad question because it invites a yes/no answer. You could ask "How frightened were you when x happened?", but they might just say "very" or "not at all". It's better to ask, "How did you feel when x happened?" Ask questions that will encourage the interviewee to talk. What happened? Why? This is particularly useful at the start of an interview
- Ask questions that will lead to clear answers. Such questions often begin with: who, what, where, when, why or how, and will help you get the information in a way that is easy to transfer into a story
- Listen. Don't interrupt with a new question until you are sure the speaker has finished their answer to the first one

- Think about what the answers mean. If you don't really understand, you will never be able to explain them to the reader
- Clarify any vague answers such as "recently" or "about"
- Think about what the reader wants to know. While you are conducting the interview, try to think about what your intro might be. That will help you to think of more questions which will build your story up.



## *Where interviewing for text and audio/video differ*

With a text interview, it is often best to leave difficult questions until you have everything else you need in your notebook or on tape. You don't want your interviewee to end the interview before you have everything you need and, as you are entirely free to use the answers you are given in any order, you can ask them in the best way to keep the interview running smoothly.

When you are interviewing for audio or video, that approach could leave you with a huge amount of editing to do. For a powerful interview in these media you want to go in hard and get strong quotes right from the start.

Multimedia journalists have to tread a fine line. The key is to gather a good deal of general information before you go into a formal, filmed or audio-taped interview.

Of course, some publications are happy with an audio or video version of the interview the reporter did for his or her text report. But, as we have already seen, this approach makes for very amateurish packages.

## *Other things to think about*

- Check spellings of names and places
- Think about whether a photograph is needed, and if so take it
- Make sure your interviewee knows how to get in touch with you. They may think of something else that is important to the story after you have gone. Leave your business card or name and phone number in case interviewees would like to contact you
- Get their phone number and/or address and if necessary find out how to contact them in case you need to get hold of them again
- Thank them for their time.

## *Beach-rescue interview*

So far, we have mostly dealt with situations where interviewing was only a small part of getting the story. Now we will look at a situation where, if you don't get an interview, you will have

very little to write. As we have mentioned before, stories often begin with a small piece of information – a tip from a contact or a brief mention of an event. We often need to find someone to interview if we are to turn those brief mentions into full stories.

Here's an example of a short post "lightly fictionalised" on an ambulance authority's news wire, which you might have on an RSS feed:

### Paramedics attend trapped boy on beach

At 13.21 hours yesterday an emergency call was received from the beach attendant on Echo Beach. The caller reported a child in difficulty. Two paramedics in a vehicle were dispatched from G Division headquarters and arrived at the scene at 13.47 hours.

On arrival at the scene the paramedics were directed towards a male child of four years of age who had got his head stuck between two rocks on the beach.

On examining the child the paramedics became aware that the child's head was severely wedged into a recess between the rocks and could not be easily extracted.

At this point concerns were raised as the tide was encroaching on the boy and would reach him in a matter of minutes.

The paramedics proceeded to make efforts to extract the boy, but initial efforts involving manipulation were unsuccessful.

Observing that the child was becoming increasingly distressed, the paramedics resorted to sedating the child as his level of distress was impeding rescue efforts.

Once the child was calmed, paramedics were able to employ a sledge hammer and cold chisel to chip away at the rocks that were trapping him.

Concerns grew as the tide was now within centimetres of the boy and fast approaching. Only after prolonged chipping at the rock could the boy be freed.

He is now in Echo Beach hospital and is in a comfortable condition. He will be kept under observation overnight.

The release ends with the name of the press contact, their direct line, mobile number and email.

## questions

What is missing from this account?

This is obviously a good rescue story, but the release gives very few of the details of the rescue. We don't know who the boy is and, just as importantly, we have no quotes that will give us all the drama of the rescue.

We can write a news story now – and should do so – but more information is needed for a full story. Ideally, we need an interview with the victim's parents and the child's rescuers. The story could be told in text and stills, on video, in audio or in a combination of these four, depending on the access we get.

Perhaps there is video of the rescue, taken either by the emergency services or by a bystander.

If you are lucky, the parents of the boy will agree to be interviewed by you with him. He is only four but he is old enough to say a little about what has happened to him. And if you can get the rescuers there as well this will add to the drama of the story.

Let's imagine you are granted an interview, and look at how you should approach it.

### *Preparation*

When you read about the story on the news wire the first thing you did was call the press contact whose details were at the end of the release. You asked them to give you more information about the boy, the family, the rescuers and the incident. You found out the parents stayed with their son at the hospital overnight and are there now.

You asked the press officer if they could get the family's permission for you to come and interview them. You got a lot of background from the press officer too.

#### About the family

The parents are Mr and Mrs John and Kay Smith and they live at 66 Star Road, Capital City, which is 20 km away from Echo Beach. They are both 36 years old. Their son is called Jack and he will be five next month. He is their only child. The father works as a supervisor in a plastics factory, and the mother works part time on a supermarket checkout.

### About the rescuers

The two paramedics were Jason Jones and Peter Round. Jason is 26 and is a senior paramedic in the Echo Beach ambulance service. Peter is 22 and recently completed his training. He is a junior paramedic and has been in the job for just six months. The beach attendant, Michael White, assisted by supplying tools.

### How the accident came about

The parents say that it all happened very quickly. Police officers will be interviewing them tomorrow to find out more about the circumstances of the accident, but the press officer cannot give you any more information now.

All this is very useful. That means you don't need to ask lots of basic routine questions when you meet the boy and his parents. If you don't get such information in advance it is a very good idea to gather it off camera before you begin to film, otherwise your video will be full of detail that needs cutting, and that makes for a tricky editing job.

You need, in your interview with the parents, to concentrate on what happened and – most importantly – how they felt.

You need to be professional in your approach to a delicate interview like this.

You must show that you are anxious not to distress the boy. Reporters who show that they just want to get the story and run off will not find their interviewees very cooperative. And uncooperative interviewees won't give you as good a story as those who trust you and are prepared to open up.

## *The interview*

We need an interview that will work both as a text report and also as a strong, succinct video report. As ever, you need to balance things so that you get the essential material on film.

Start with some simple questions off camera. Perhaps just confirm some basic details such as their names, ages, address and other details you need, such as what jobs the parents do.

Writing in a notebook can mean that you have your head down and are not looking at your interviewee. Try not to keep your head buried. Look up regularly, and nod or make other appropriate gestures and comments as they talk. It is important that they feel this is a conversation, or they may become reluctant to talk.

You need to get a fully rounded picture in your head of what happened. One good approach to doing that is to ask them to start at the beginning and go on from there.

If you take your interviewees through the story chronologically you will get that full picture, and be able to spot any gaps in your knowledge.

With the rescue story you would start with the parents, asking about events before they found their son was in danger. You can turn to the rescuers at the point when they arrive at the scene. From there you have a dual interview to manage. And, at the right moment, you will want to try to get some quotes from the young boy.

Be prepared to ask lots of questions before you start filming so that you have a mass of information from which to pick the very best points to address when the camera is rolling. Thin interviews produce thin stories.

With the parents you can ask them about their visit to the beach. Do they come often? When did they arrive this time? Get them talking about their day before the accident happened. Little of this makes good film, so it is worth getting out of the way.

As they answer your questions, other questions will occur to you. Without them realising it, and without it seeming forced, you can learn a lot about the family. If they break off from their chronological account, and tell you other interesting things, let them do so, but make sure you go back to the story at the point they left off, and get them to continue.

Now you are ready to film. Here's the transcript of the video you shoot. Jack's father does almost all the talking. His mother seems very upset.

**It must have been a real ordeal for the family. How are you feeling now?**
*Very, very relieved that Jack is okay. It could have been so much worse.*

**Is Echo Beach somewhere you come often?**
*Jack loved Echo Beach. Any time we had free and if the weather was good, we would take him there. He loved to play on the rocks. There are pools with little fish in them that he tried to catch with his hands.*

**How did Jack get into difficulties? Had he wandered off?**
*No. We could see Jack playing on the rocks just 10 metres away from us. There were several other children there too and an older girl was holding Jack's hand. We were watching him carefully because the tide was coming in, and I was just getting up to bring him back when we saw him let go of the girl's hand and slip. His head disappeared from view and his legs were waving in the air.*

**What did you do?**
*I ran as fast as I could down to him. When I got to him I saw his top half was down between two rocks.*

**How did you realise he had got trapped?**
*I took hold of his legs with one hand and reached down with the other under his chest – I was trying to lift him out.*

**How was Jack at this point?**
*He was very frightened. He was struggling and crying out. I told him not to worry and that we would soon get him out.*

*I shouted for help because there were only children around and I knew I could not free him on my own. The beach attendant ran over and between us we tried tugging and twisting Jack but it was no good.*

*Then the attendant took out his mobile phone and called 999.*

**[To the ambulanceman] How was Jack when you got to him?**
*Jack was very frightened. He wasn't crying but he was very distressed and struggling violently. We talked to him and tried to pull him free, but we couldn't.*

*The beach attendant told us he had a hammer and cold chisel in his workshop, and as the rock was soft sandstone we could chip away at it. I asked him to go and get the tools.*

*At this point I decided Jack needed to be sedated so that he would not struggle and be injured as we chipped away at the rock.*

*Once Jack was calm, I was able to shield his head with my hands while my colleague Peter chipped the rock away. Within a few seconds I was able to lift Jack away from the rocks.*

*I was very relieved that we had been able to free him. The water was coming in fast and was only a few metres away. I dread to think what would have happened if we had got there 10 minutes later. He could have been drowned.*

**[Back to Jack's father] What were you feeling as you saw the tide getting closer and closer?**
*I was terrified. I really thought that Jack was going to drown. I was so scared and just didn't know what to do. Once Jack was free I just hugged him so tight. We were all in tears and so relieved.*

**How is Jack now?**
*He's still in shock we think. He isn't saying much at all and he is very clingy, just hugging us all the time.*

**[To Jack] Jack, has it been a bit of an adventure?**
*[Jack nods] It was slippery and I fell. I was very scared but Jason got me out.*

**Is there anything you'd like to say to Jason?**
*Thank you very much for saving my life.*

**What would you like to do when you go home?**
*I'd like to have some ice cream.*

**[Turning back to the parents] Do you blame yourselves at all for what happened?**
*[Jack's mother speaks for the first time] I blame myself, I should never have let him go on the rocks on his own. What happened to Jack should be a warning to other parents. It could so easily have been so much worse. Jack could have died.*

*[Jack's father adds] We'd just like to thank Jason so much. He saved our little boy.*

*Writing up the text report*

The quotes we have make a comprehensive video report. If we have footage of the rescue we can intercut it with the audio track of the interview.

## questions

As we are focusing on text reporting in this chapter, let's put a story together from the quotes and other information. Write a news story of between 300 and 400 words. Bear in mind that a brief news story has already appeared on your website, detailing the rescue. So what's new? What's new is that we have the interview, and Jack has met his rescuers.

Don't read on until your version is complete. Here is our suggestion:

**Head: Jack, 4, thanks rescuers who saved his life**

Sell: A four-year-old boy rescued from drowning on Echo Beach has thanked the men who saved his life. *More. . .*

Jack Smith was playing at the beach when he fell and trapped his head between two rocks.

With the rising tide just metres away from him, paramedics Jason Jones and Peter Round chipped the sandstone away with a hammer and chisel to release the boy.

Jack, who became distressed during the rescue operation and had to be sedated to keep him calm, was taken to Echo Beach Hospital overnight for observation.

Speaking at his bedside, his father John, of Star Road, Capital City, said: "We'd just like to thank Jason so much. He saved our little boy."

Jack's mother, Kay, added: "What happened to Jack should be a warning to other parents. It could so easily have been so much worse. Jack could have died."

As for Jack, he said: "It was slippery and I fell. I was very scared but Jason got me out."

Asked if he'd like to say anything to his rescuer, Jack said: "Thank you for saving my life."

Jack was just metres away from them on the rocks, said his parents, when he fell. Beach attendant Michael White called the emergency services and, when it became clear the boy could not be freed by hand, ran to his workshop and fetched the tools with which he was cut free.

The rescue was a race against time as the waves were fast approaching the boy.

Mr Smith said: "I was terrified. I really thought that Jack was going to drown."

Paramedic Jason Jones said: "I was very relieved that we had been able to free him. The water was coming in fast and was only a few metres away. I dread to think what would have happened if we had got there 10 minutes later. He could have been drowned."

## *How to conduct an email interview*

If you can't interview face to face or on the phone, you may have to make do with an email interview. They can be tough. Here are some thoughts on how to get the best out of them.

Email is fine for getting a couple of quick quotes, but where you need a substantial interview it is very much second best to a face-to-face or phone chat.

Also, because it only takes a few seconds to ping off an email, you could easily approach an email interview too casually. You might find an interviewee who is happy to engage in a dialogue, answering one or two questions and then responding to your follow-ups, but most won't. So you need to ask a clear list of questions at the outset.

You should ask plenty of questions if you hope to get a decent piece out of this email interview, because you will need plenty of answers. You can't craft a 400-word piece out of the answers to two or three questions. Go for around 15, with a maximum of 20.

You could start your email with an apology for the length of the list, and explain that you are asking so much because you want to make sure you are able to write an in-depth piece which completely covers a complex story or fully reflects the subject's role, achievements, successes or whatever. Your subject is likely to cooperate if they think that will win them a better write-up.

As with any verbal interview, open questions often work best, but you need to be careful how you structure them in an email.

Imagine you are conducting an email interview with the owner of a company. If you ask: "Was your product launch a success?", you may well get the one-word answer "Yes". If you ask: "How successful was your product launch?", you may get the answer "Very". That's not much use to you.

Ask a more detailed question: "How did you measure the effectiveness of your latest product launch and what did the results tell you?" This should produce a considered, detailed response which has the sort of specific information you will need to build a piece.

With an email interview, try to come up with questions that need detailed answers supported by facts and figures.

One significant drawback with an email interview is that initial reactions may be reviewed and rewritten several times before the answers arrive in your inbox so it is hard to get good, natural-sounding quotes. An interviewee who will give you a pithy comment in person turns out a bland platitude in an email.

You must try to get good reaction. You need quotes with words such as delighted, shocked, gutted, elated, amazed. For an interview to work you need some emotion and personality and, hopefully, some good quotes. Asking "How did you feel when . . .?" is better than "Were you angry/upset when . . .?", but you will probably find it hard to get good sharp quotes via email, however you phrase the question.

Finally, mention that if they would prefer a phone interview next time this might take up less of their valuable time.

## *Difficult interviews*

Sometimes interviewees are uncooperative. They either don't want to talk, or they want to control what you use from the interview they give and how you use it.

Here are some key difficulties, and how to deal with them.

### *This must be off the record*

There are some rules here. If an interviewee wants to go off the record, they need to make that request before they say anything more. You don't have to go off the record retrospectively.

If they want to go off the record it is worth asking why. Sometimes you can reassure them and keep everything on record. If they insist, let them say what they want to say, then, if it is good material, ask if some of it can be put on the record or, if not, whether it can be attributed to a source of some kind. A source close to the company/organisation or whatever

is recognised by those who are media savvy as meaning the person or someone very close to them.

### *Promise me you won't report this*

Be very reluctant to make such a promise. After all, what your interviewee has said off the record might come later from another source. The most you should say is that if you do report the material they are worried about it will be because you have it from a second source, who may or may not be named.

### *Can I see your story before it is published?*

This is generally a very bad idea. At the very least we get into the same territory we discussed under email interviewing. People who gave you great quotes get cold feet and want to withdraw them, water them down or rewrite them into something one would never say.

Sometimes it is necessary to agree to some kind of disclosure of your story before it is published. If you have a contract with an interviewee they may have negotiated copy approval.

Otherwise, be extremely reluctant to allow your copy to be seen. Many publishers have a blanket ban on reporters doing this, which gives you an easy get-out if the matter is raised. Know what the policy is and, before you go against it, make sure your editor approves.

A good halfway house – if you must – is to say you will let the interviewee check their quotes for accuracy, but not see the rest of the article. After all, quotes from others and the other material you gather are not there for them to interfere with. If you have a full shorthand note or a tape of the interview you can point out that you will only change things that you have got factually wrong.

There can still be struggles. Someone will say, "I may have said it but it's not what I meant. I meant this" – and then they give you a bland statement that has lost all its power or interest.

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## Challenging reporting assignments

In Chapter One we looked at a number of typical basic reporting assignments and how to handle them. Here are some more challenging scenarios, related to multimedia and full story cycle reporting:

- Report at press conferences, product launches and police appeals
- Attend public meetings, including those of local authorities

- Report on public events
- Report on court cases.



## *Press conferences*

### *Beforehand: research*

You must go to a press conference well briefed. Conferences are usually announced with a press release, and you may be sent documents, pictures and other material. You'll be told who will be present, what access you will have to them and arrangements for photography. Read through it all, and do a search in your archives for what you have written about the subject, and more generally to ensure you know what is going on.

Plan your questions.

### *Beforehand: reporting*

If the press conference is to focus on an important issue – such as a major building development or a company's plans for expansion – you can report on that right away. If you know the conference is to announce a decision that matters to readers, then tell them in advance. You may be able to get a steer on what the announcement is likely to say.

It might be worth a poll on the website. Readers may want to express their concerns about what the outcome is likely to be. They may wish to express their opinions or give their insights into what they feel is likely to happen.

If this has been a running story, you can link to key pieces about it on the website.

### *At the event*

Is it highly newsworthy? If so, you might want to send tweets or other SMS messages and news-ticker lines from it during the event.

Is it worth streaming live video from? Should you take stills and video for uploading afterwards?

Can you get a quick one-to-one interview on film of the key person at the conference?

Press conferences can range from glum events where you are one of only two or three reporters present and where nothing very newsworthy is being said, to huge scrums where it is very hard to make your voice heard. Of course, you can report anything that is said.

Just remember, the press conference is not news in itself. It's what is said there that your report should focus on.

The format is likely to involve an opening statement and may include a video demonstration. Those holding the conference will be setting out their case in the most positive and persuasive light that they can.

Then they will open up for questions. If it's a well-organised conference you put your hand up and wait to be called to ask your question. When asked, you stand up, say who you are and the news organisation you are from. You will probably get the chance for a supplementary question, but if you try to ask more than two, other reporters and the organiser are likely to get fed up with you.

Concentrate while answers to other questions are being given – don't waste your chance by being told "I've already answered that."

You need a clear "what's new" angle and some good verbatim quotes. If the issue covered is contentious you'll want to put the opposing view to the speaker – you need to pose the question that those opponents would express if they were there.

If you realise during the conference that there is something that is not being said which is hugely material to the story, you may be on to an exclusive angle. Reporters in this situation need to decide whether to ask the question and let everyone have the angle, or to keep quiet in the hope they can grab the speaker one to one immediately afterwards and keep their angle to themselves.

### *After the event*

If the event is newsworthy you will want to follow up your tweets with a full story online as soon as you can.

There may be additional reporting to be done. If the issue is contentious, you need the views of opponents. You will want to look at the implications of the announcement.

Perhaps a major piece is planned for print. If so, flag that up online. Once the breaking news for the web is sorted out you can concentrate on additional reporting, updating online as required and a considered piece for print.

### *The legal position*

We are only covering law where it relates directly to the reporting situations we are exploring. You'll need to consult a media law textbook for the full chapter and verse on things. All sorts of contentious things might be said at a press conference, things which, if said away from that conference, might be said to be defamatory of a certain individual or group, and that could potentially land us in legal trouble. Defamation is the umbrella term for slander and libel.

Slander is publication in a transient form – speech. Libel is in a permanent form.

Believe it or not, there is no one clear definition of defamation, but we can think of it as material "which is calculated to injure the reputation of another by exposing him to hatred, contempt or ridicule". It might also be a statement which is likely to diminish the subject "in the eyes of right-thinking people".

Defamatory material is that which:

- Is to a person's discredit
- Tends to lower them in the estimation of others
- Causes them to be shunned or avoided
- Causes them to be exposed to hatred, ridicule or contempt.

If someone says that a person is a conman, and we report it, then that is defamatory. Let's put to one side for a moment whether it is true. If they sue us, and we defend the statement, we'll have to prove it was true. However, if someone is called a conman in a press conference and we report it, we have a defence under the 1996 Defamation Act.

The Act actually applies to public meetings, which we cover below, but also covers press conferences if they fit the legal definition of a public meeting. They fit that definition of a public meeting if the press conference is bona fide, lawfully held, for the furtherance or discussion of a matter of public concern.

If it is, then you are covered by what is known as qualified privilege, which means that a fair and accurate report of such proceedings should be safe if published without malice and subject, on request, to a reasonable right of reply.

So you need to determine whether the matters you report on are of public concern, not merely of interest to the public.

Matters concerning a person's job or profession, or the services they provide to the public, might be of public concern. So if at a press conference it is said that the town's mayor, or the proprietor of a company that our readers are interested in, is a conman, and that person sued us, we'd have the defence at hand of qualified privilege.

That person's private pastimes might not be of public concern, unless they are in a position of authority, particularly over children or vulnerable adults. So if the head teacher of a school was called a conman, we'd have the protection of qualified privilege in reporting that statement, whether or not it is true.

But what if you were emailed a press release with defamatory statements in it in advance of the meeting and decided to write it up from that? The press release is not safe to use before the meeting. You would need to check if it was actually distributed at the meeting, so becoming part of proceedings, or given to all press before or afterwards.

Only what is said at the meeting is covered by qualified privilege. Things said outside it are not covered. So allegations hurled outside, after a heated meeting, are not covered.

Calling a press conference is a useful way for groups or individuals to air contentious issues, and helps you to report them more fully. But most press conferences are much more straightforward.

*Press conference examples*

Let's look at some press conferences, and see how stories are obtained from them.

### A PRODUCT LAUNCH

Our first example is a press conference at which EMI announced a new digital music initiative. They did it in their canteen and had a band playing live.

## on the website

- **If you go to the equivalent section to this on the website you'll find all the links mentioned below.**

This link takes you to an audio recording of the conference:

**http://w3.cantos.com/07/pjxrobbi-703-5zvx0/interviews.php?task=view#**

There is also a PowerPoint presentation:

**http://w3.cantos.com/07/pjxrobbi-703-5zvx0/video/EMI_2_April_press_conference_slides.pdf**

EMI
2 April press conference
A replay of the webcast of the presentation, which took place on Monday 2 April 2007, is now available
Agenda:
Eric Nicoli, CEO EMI Group
Steve Jobs, CEO Apple
Q&A
Please click on the links below to access the webcast :
Audio only
Audio only
Download
Download

## questions

Listen to the press conference and imagine you are reporting on it. Decide what your audience is: a general interest publication or a specialist one? What's the story for your chosen audience?

Write your story, at the length you think it is worth, then look at those below. Compare yours to them.

The story is about EMI introducing new, high-quality digital downloads and giving customers greater freedom in how they use them.

Here's the story in the *Guardian*:

guardian.co.uk

News | Sport | Comment | Culture | Business | Money | Life & style

News › Media › Digital media

EMI and Apple in DRM deal

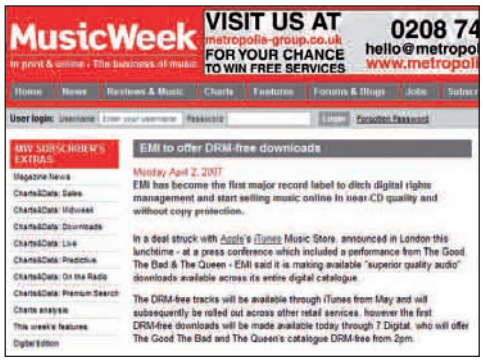
Graeme Wearden
guardian.co.uk, Monday 2 April 2007 11.57 BST
Article history

Steve Jobs

In a major change of policy for a record label, EMI announced today that it will begin selling songs without copy protection through Apple's iTunes music store.

**http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2007/apr/02/digitalmedia.buyingmusic**

This is how *Music Week*, a B2B magazine covering the music industry, reported the story:


MusicWeek

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Charts&Data: Premium Search
Charts analysis
This week's features
Digital Edition

EMI to offer DRM-free downloads

Monday April 2, 2007

EMI has become the first major record label to ditch digital rights management and start selling music online in near-CD quality and without copy protection.

In a deal struck with Apple's iTunes Music Store, announced in London this lunchtime - at a press conference which included a performance from The Good, The Bad & The Queen - EMI said it is making available "superior quality audio" downloads available across its entire digital catalogue.

The DRM-free tracks will be available through iTunes from May and will subsequently be rolled out across other retail services, however the first DRM-free downloads will be made available today through 7 Digital, who will offer The Good The Bad and The Queen's catalogue DRM-free from 2pm.

**http://www.musicweek.com/story.asp?sectioncode=1&storycode=27376**

Note that at the end of the report *Music Week* links to the webcast of the conference, so readers can find out everything that was said.

## An amazing discovery (if true)

Here's a link to a press conference from two men who claim to have discovered a yeti-like creature called Bigfoot.

### on the website

- A video of the press conference is embedded in the site.

NECN.com Real News. Right Now.
Overcast
Temp: 26°F
More federal aid for General Motors
Vita back in MA for arraignment
Shoe-throwing Iraqi journalist's trial postponed
Israel mounts fourth day of raids on Gaza
NATION Bigfoot Trekkers claim to have body of Bigfoot

**http://www.necn.com/Boston/Nation/Bigfind-Trekkers-claim-to-have-body-of-Bigfoot/1218828693.html**

The key question here is: can this be true? The stories linked to below show how reporters combined what is said at the conference with a range of other material to enable readers to come to their own conclusions about that.

Here's a report on it from Fox:

FOX NEWS.com
We Report. You Decide.
And no lengthy contract
SciTech
SCITECH HOME
NOW GREEN?
TECH TUESDAY
ARCHAEOLOGY
CYBERSECURITY
EVOLUTION AND PALEONTOLOGY
NATURAL SCIENCE
PATENTS AND INNOVATION
FOXNEWS.COM HOME > SCITECH
Bigfoot Hunters Press Conference Reveals... Little
FOX NEWS
The much-anticipated Bigfoot press conference Friday afternoon in Palo Alto, Calif., revealed little more than two men — introduced by a self-styled Sasquatch seeker — claiming to possess the 7-foot

**http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,404805,00.html**

And another story from *Scientific American*:

**http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=bigfoot-press-conference-biscardi**

### Police press conference

The police may call press conferences for various reasons, but there is one for a particular purpose that gives you special protection under law in addition to the qualified privilege mentioned earlier. That is a press conference when they are seeking publicity in order to catch a criminal. It is known as a police appeal. In such circumstances they are allowed to make all sorts of allegations – and we can report them – that are clearly defamatory of the accused. They will also contain statements that are what is known as "in contempt of court".

I'll just explain briefly what contempt of court means before we move on. In British law we have an abiding principle – that the court's role is to determine an accused person's guilt or innocence. If we write anything that would tend to prejudge a court's decision, we are usurping the role of the court and hence could be said to be in contempt of it.

Once a person is arrested or charged, or if a warrant for their arrest has been issued, proceedings are said to be active. Those proceedings are likely to lead to a court case, and to a finding of guilt or innocence by that court. That means we can say very little about the case. We ought also, as responsible journalists, to be very careful when covering events that are likely, at a later date, to be the subject of a court case, but where proceedings are not yet active.

The police are allowed to make statements that are defamatory and in contempt of court when seeking to apprehend a suspect because the law determines that the greater public good is served by catching the accused person than by protecting their right not to be defamed and to get a fair trial.

That's clearly the case if a serial killer is on the loose. It's much more important to prevent further murders than to protect the killer's rights.

But this special circumstance lasts only until the person is caught.

Here's an example of what can be reported from a police appeal, taken from the web edition of the *Manchester Evening News*.

## on the website

- The links take you to the full story.

First the police appeal and a great deal can be said.

Manchester Evening News
CityLife.co.uk
GO
Home
News
Business
Sport
Entertainment
Lifestyle
Jobs
You are here: Home | News | Manhunt after girl's abduction terror
Browse Sections
Business
Technology
Health
Education
Local elections
Special reports
User comments
Interactive
News
Print Article | Share this article | Submit Comments
Manhunt after girl's abduction terror
Yakub Qureshi
23/10/2006
A MAN from Stockport is at the centre of a nationwide manhunt after a teenager was abducted in North Wales.
Detectives last night confirmed they had widened their search for Alan Grant, who also uses the name Alan Weston.
The 15-year-old was snatched from a street in Wrexham on Friday night and found 15 hours later, 70 miles away in Bangor.

**http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/s/226/226180_manhunt_after_girls_abduction_terror.html**

The story is clearly defamatory of the man – it accuses him of being a rapist and abductor, and it is in contempt of court because an arrest warrant has been issued, hence the case is what is known as active and no matters that are likely to form part of a trial should be discussed.

It says he snatched a 15-year-old girl from the street and subjected her to a horrendous ordeal. He is said to be a danger to the public and should not be approached. He is also said to have raped in the past.

But the law balances the man's rights with the public's right to know. The public needs protecting, in the opinion of the police, and this consideration takes precedence over other concerns.

But that only applies while he is being hunted. Once he is caught, your protection goes. So you have to do all you can to check, before you publish, that he has not been caught. As soon as he has, you can say very little.

Here's how the story was reported in the *MEN* after he was caught, but before he had been charged:

**http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/s/226/226359_man_charged_with_abducting_girl_15.html**

Now the assertions are peppered with "allegedlys", but the sequence of events is still recounted. The law textbooks will indicate that this is dangerous.

Once he has been charged, here is an even briefer report:

**http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/s/226/226403_man_charged_over_teen_abduction.html**

Now there are no accounts of events. The report concentrates on a man being charged with an alleged abduction and two serious sexual assaults.

Finally, just to complete the story, here is the report of his subsequent trial:

**http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/s/233/233118_man_who_raped_15yearold_jailed_for_life.html**

## *Public meetings*

We looked at one type of public meeting in Chapter One – a council committee meeting. A much less formal public meeting might be called by a group of residents who are protesting about, say, traffic or crime. There are all sorts of others.

One common problem can be that you have several, perhaps many, people making contributions. In a council meeting you can easily identify the people speaking. In a public meeting you may have no idea who they are and they may not give their name when they speak. In a crowded room they can be hard to get to.

One headache is getting quotes down from people saying interesting things, memorising their faces – and who said what – and then wading up to them or grabbing them afterwards to get the personal details you need.

You may want more from a particular speaker. Perhaps they have mentioned a personal situation that warrants more space in your story – or that lends itself to a video, stills or audio report.

### *A quick point of law*

You have a statutory right to attend some meetings, some you can go to because they are open to the public or concern matters of public interest and you are a member of that public, as well as being a journalist, and others you need an invitation to attend. See above under **Press conferences** for a quick rundown on the law relating to reporting on public meetings.

### *Beforehand: research*

Learn the background to the story and why the meeting has been called. Read any documents you have been sent about it. If there is an agenda you'll be able to see the areas that will be covered. Check what has been written before, by you and others. Check any blogs by participants.

### *Beforehand: reporting*

If the meeting warrants it, preview it in print and online. Online, link to any stories from you and others, and any relevant documents that will help readers understand what is coming.

### *At the event*

A well-organised meeting will have an agenda and a chairman to ensure fairness. They will have rules about how they operate, called standing orders; and minutes, a record of the meeting, will be kept.

Speakers will be called, a debate will develop and a vote or votes will be taken to decide on the matter under discussion.

Less well-organised meetings can be much more haphazard. Perhaps the meeting has been called by angry residents. For example, they may be worried about vandalism and call a meeting, demanding that a senior police officer come and address them. These are much tougher to cover effectively. As well as the practicalities mentioned above, you may not know what, if anything, has been decided.

### *After the event*

If the meeting reached no clear conclusion, if it was just an opportunity for people to sound off, you may have to stay behind at the end and talk to the key people involved. How did the meeting go? Were they happy with what they heard? If there was a decision, did they agree with it and will they abide by it? What is the next step?

The fact of the meeting is not the main thrust of the story, it's what came out of it that gives you your news angle.

Even a well-organised meeting can leave some people dissatisfied. Is there conflict about what was decided? Very often you need to follow up after the meeting by interviewing key speakers and putting the points they raised to others who were not at the meeting – either officials who have an influence over what the meeting has asked to be delivered, or opponents of the views expressed at the meeting.

### questions

One legal point: think back to what we said earlier about reporting at public meetings. Which Act offers you protection in what you report from a public meeting? What protection does it provide you with? Do you have the same protection for things said outside that meeting? Don't read on until you have your answers.

The Defamation Act 1996 offers us protection when we cover a public meeting. We have qualified privilege in what we report. Things said outside the meeting do not have such protection.

### *Some examples of public meetings*

Outlined below are some of the kinds of stories that can be gathered at routine public meetings. You'll find links to the videos on the website.

CONGESTION CHARGE

**http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=SkRC8ZctQsQ**

This video is an edited account of a public meeting held in the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, which is outside the western extension of the traffic congestion charge area that covers Kensington and Chelsea.

## questions

Can you identify who has published this report? Do you detect any agenda in the report? Don't read on until you have decided.

The report is from Hammersmith and Fulham Council. It quotes both those opposed to congestion charging and those in favour of it. There was a vote at the end of the meeting, in which a majority of those present were in favour of scrapping the western extension charging area.

It ends: "The message is loud and clear. Residents did not ask for it, it has not worked, and it needs to be removed."

Many councils have their own newspapers, magazines and news websites. Some local newspaper publishers oppose them – partly because they feel they present the council's agenda on the news. They also oppose them for commercial reasons. Councils may stop putting public notices and job vacancies in the independent press, preferring to use their publications, which they distribute to all residents.

## Post office closure protest meeting

Here's another example of a public meeting from the same source.

**http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=7h3GIvoDJsM**

Residents have come to tell Post Office officials what they think of their plans to close some post offices.

### on the website

- **Find a link to the video. Take a look at it before you read on.**

### questions

Is there an agenda behind this story?

There could be, because it appears that residents want to retain post offices, and the council supports them in this. Because the decision on closures is one for central government, this report could be seen as Hammersmith and Fulham lobbying against the plan and making clear to local electors that the decision is not down to its councillors.

The Post Office representative at the meeting says it is losing £170m, because the number of people using post offices has decline dramatically.

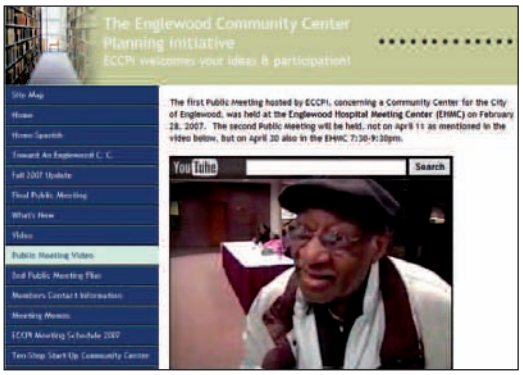
A string of speakers follows, none of whom are identified, which makes it impossible to identify what interests they might be representing. Quotes from unidentified speakers would look very poor in print, and they ought not to be tolerated in video reports.

There is a strong editorial stance behind the report – it appears designed to show residents how much the council is doing to fight post office closures. It ends: "Surely sense will prevail." Such a comment would be unacceptable in a text report in a traditional local newspaper. Local TV has always allowed its reporters more leeway in presenting opinions – either their own or those they claim to have drawn from those they have spoken to, but to whom they do not attribute the views directly.

Let's remember one of the basic tenets of objective reporting that we covered in Chapter One. If you want to express an opinion, get someone to express it, and attribute the view to that person. That's worth remembering, whatever medium you are reporting in.

### A COMMUNITY CENTRE

This is a report on a public meeting called to discuss ideas for a local community centre. It demonstrates the need to get key participants talking after the session to crystallise what they are calling for and what has happened.


The Englewood Community Center
Planning Initiative
ECCPI welcomes your ideas & participation!
Site Map
Home
Fall 2007 Update
What's New
Video
Public Meeting Video
Meeting Minutes
The first Public Meeting hosted by ECCPI, concerning a Community Center for the City of Englewood, was held at the Englewood Hospital Meeting Center (EHMC) on February 28, 2007. The second Public Meeting will be held, not on April 11 as mentioned in the video below, but on April 30 also in the EHMC 7:30-9:30pm.
YouTube
Search

**http://cccpi.net/eccpi_first_public_meeting_video.aspx**

## *Public events*

It might be a carnival, a firework display, a concert or a street party. It could involve dozens, hundreds or thousands of people.

### *Beforehand: research*

You'll have got the picture by now. If we are covering an event we owe it to ourselves to read up on it. Find out about its history, know who the organisers are and how to contact them, check what press facilities will be available. There may be a press area in which we can get coffee and food, and edit and file our reports.

### *Beforehand: reporting*

If it is a major annual event, then the preparations for it and details of the key highlights this year will make for good advance stories.

### *At the event*

Major events always have the potential to go wrong in some way. The thrill ride at the funfair on the common may malfunction. If 50 people are stuck at the top of the big dipper for half an hour and have to be rescued by firefighters that becomes the story. The organisers might want you to suppress it, but obviously you can't. Even if your employers are sponsoring the event, you can't ignore a damaging news story that comes from it.

### *After the event*

How successful the event was will be of interest to readers. If it's a big event, we can ask readers to send in their pictures and videos.

### *An example of a public event: Notting Hill Carnival*

The Notting Hill Carnival is one of the biggest public events in the world. For three days the streets of this area of West London are taken over by an incredibly vibrant and popular display attended by hundreds of thousands of people.

From this link you'll find a video that captures the atmosphere and enjoyment of the event:

**http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=MTPrK1YWVgA**

But there can also be trouble. Here's a Times Online/Sky video recording:

**http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article4611991.ece**

## questions

If you were reporting on the carnival and had seen both sides of it, how would you structure your report?

If we imagine both films having been made at the same year's carnival, clearly they don't, individually, give a clear impression of how things were. A balanced report would cover both aspects. You might write a text report that covered both aspects, and then embed the two videos to give readers a clear understanding of both sides of things. Alternatively, you could use elements from both and edit the footage into one coherent report that covered both sides of the story.

As that last video shows, reporting can be dangerous. In the Sky film the cameraman is behind police lines. Sometimes reporters are unprotected in situations in which their lives could be in danger. Each of us has to decide – both as a general principle and in each individual situation – how much risk we are prepared to take.

But risk assessment is an important element in the daily lives of multimedia journalists, who may be carrying expensive kit: a sophisticated mobile, a video camera and more. All employers must take such risks into account when they send us out.

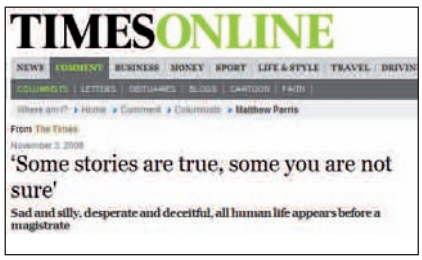
## *Court reporting*

Local newspapers used to take covering court cases very seriously. They'd aim to cover a good proportion of cases in their local magistrates', youth and crown courts. Today, with small staffs, a lot don't bother unless it's a really juicy case.

In magazines, there is hardly any court reporting. So why should you bother with this bit of the book? If you are on a course accredited by the National Council for the Training of Journalists, court reporting is considered an essential skill. And even if it's not essential on the course you are completing, you never know when you might have to do it. And trying to cover court when you don't know the rules is very dangerous.

Court reporting presents many pitfalls for the journalist who does not know the law relating to what can and cannot be said, when and about whom. Indeed, this is the most dangerous place when you are training, because your mistakes can get you in serious trouble. A slip could cause a trial to be abandoned.

Here we introduce court reporting and go through the essentials. You'll also need to get a dedicated media law book.


TIMESONLINE

NEWS | COMMENT | BUSINESS | MONEY | SPORT | LIFE & STYLE | TRAVEL | DRIVIN

COLUMNISTS | LETTERS | OBITUARIES | BLOGS | CARTOON | FAITH

Where am I? » Home » Comment » Columnists » Matthew Parris

From The Times

November 3, 2008

'Some stories are true, some you are not sure'

Sad and silly, desperate and deceitful, all human life appears before a magistrate

If you haven't yet been to court, read Matthew Parris's account from *The Times*:

**http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/matthew_parris/article5067798.ece**

### *Legal essentials*

We have what is known as absolute privilege for reports of court proceedings that are fair, accurate and contemporaneous. (That's a higher level of protection than we have for what we say and write about public meetings, where we have just qualified privilege.) If we fulfil that three-part (fair, accurate and contemporaneous) test we are safe. It means that, for example, however defamatory something said in court and reported by us might be, no action can be taken against us. But we also need to be aware of any orders made by the court that restrict our right to report freely.

If we are covering a preliminary hearing – of a case that will go on to be tried in full at another time and quite possibly in a different court, we are tightly restricted in what we can say.

## *Beforehand: research*

**http://www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk**

This website of Her Majesty's Courts Service has details of all courts in England and Wales. For Scottish courts, go to:

**http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/**

The Her Majesty's Courts Service site gives details of all crown courts and the cases being tried there, but it doesn't list magistrates' courts because things change too fast. For those lists you need to contact the court. The Scottish site covers the equivalent courts in that country.

The list of forthcoming cases is the starting point for court reporting. These tell you when a particular case is due to come before a particular court, but things change. It is only ever a rough guide, and you need to check it with the court. The people to get to know there are those in the magistrates' clerks' office.

## *Beforehand: reporting*

Here you have to be very careful. We have a principle under British law that nothing should be written or said that might prejudice a person's right to a free trial. Our interpretation of that is far stricter than in, say, the US, where comment and allegations can be hurled at a defendant and the assumption is that the jury will be able to put that out of their minds and judge them purely on the case that is presented to them in court.

Just to repeat something we said earlier when looking at police appeals, in the UK the principle is that the court's role is to determine what happened in a case. If we write anything that would tend to prejudge what happened, we are usurping the role of the court and hence could be said to be in contempt of it. So once a person is arrested or charged, or if a warrant for their arrest has been issued, proceedings are said to be active. That means we can say very little about the case. We also have to be very careful when covering events that are likely, at a later date, to be the subject of a court case.

Or at least, that's what the law says.

Let's think about a case, for example, where there has been a road accident and someone has been killed. If we follow the letter of the law, we can only give a very bland outline of the accident. We can't say anything that would suggest where blame lies. And we can't quote witnesses in case they were in shock and later recall more clearly what happened. If we have published their hazy account, the logic goes, they may be reluctant to change their story in court to a version that is closer to the truth, once they have had a chance to recall it.

So if a baby is killed when a car, for some reason, hits him while he is being pushed in his pushchair along the pavement, there are many possible explanations for the accident, but we have to leave it up to the court to decide which is the right one.

The driver might be tried for the accident. He or she might be found to be guilty of one of a number of driving offences. Or they might be cleared.

But many media organisations allow witnesses and other interpretations of what happened, as happened when the story I have outlined above was reported in Telegraph.co.uk:

Telegraph.co.uk

Home News Sport Finance Comment Travel Lifestyle Culture Vic

UK World Politics Celebrities Obituaries Weird Earth Science Health Education

You are here: Home > News > UK News

Baby killed after car careers off London road

By Graham Tibbetts
Last Updated: 1:56AM BST 24 Aug 2007

A two-month-old boy in a pushchair was killed and his mother injured yesterday when a car mounted the pavement and struck them.

It is thought the driver's brake or accelerator pedal may have become jammed on his jeans before the accident in Willesden Green, north-west London. The baby suffered serious head injuries and, despite efforts to save him, died later in hospital.

The driver, a 62-year-old man from Harrow, Middlesex, gave a negative breath test at the scene and was released after questioning by police. Officers have declined to identify the victims until all family have been informed.

Witnesses said the mother, a 32-year-old woman who lives locally with her husband, was pushing their only child along Park Avenue just after 6pm when a silver Ford Fiesta approached from behind with its engine revving.

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Related Content
More on UK News
Baby dies after car hits pram
Parents' plea over crash that killed baby
Baby, mother and boy die in crash

**http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1560946/Baby-killed-after-car-careers-off-London-road.html**

The report doesn't identify the driver or accuse him of anything, but it does give a great deal of information that, were a court case to be held, would be material to any finding of the court. The police say, for instance, that the driver said his brakes had failed.

Let's take another case. The Liverpool and England footballer Steven Gerrard was arrested after a brawl in a nightclub, held and questioned for several hours and then charged with assault.

Here's the report from Times Online:

TIMESONLINE

NEWS | COMMENT | BUSINESS | MONEY | SPORT | LIFE & STYLE | TRAVEL

Steven Gerrard charged after brawl

**http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/crime/article5415935.ece**

It contains this: "It is understood that the alleged victim, Marcus McGee, who was a DJ at the club, was sitting behind the bar when Gerrard asked him to change the music. He is then said to have asked for the music card that operates the sound system. Mr McGee apparently refused."

These are events that, to follow a strict interpretation of the law, it could be said are up to a court to decide.

What happens with a major story that involves really serious charges – alleged terrorists plotting mass murder, for example? In 2006, 23 Muslims were arrested for an alleged plot to blow up nine jets. The case was finally resolved in the courts in September 2009.

Many newspapers carried headlines that assumed the allegations were true. Here's the *Sun*:

THE Sun

Sun SINGLES

What does the length of your fingers say about your love life?

NEWS

Got a story? Text: 63000 - Email: talkback@the-sun.co.uk

Jet bottle bombers foiled

By JOHN KAY and SIMON HUGHES

Published: 11 Aug 2006

ADD YOUR COMMENTS

A TERROR plot to blow up nine jets using explosives in drinks bottles was smashed yesterday.

Suicide bombers aimed to detonate the devices over

Plot ... innocent-looking bottle

RELATED STORIES

Reports carried quotes from politicians and police chiefs such as: "We have stopped an attempt to commit mass murder on an unimaginable scale." There were pictures of the accused, which could be a problem if any witness was asked to identify one of the men in court. The jury might find it impossible to be sure that the witness remembered the face they saw carrying out a crime, rather than the one they saw in a newspaper.

The media lawyer Duncan Lamont pondered, in a *Guardian* article, why it was that when a number of suspects are arrested when allegedly planning a terrorist atrocity, the usual rules are ignored by the press:

**http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2006/aug/21/mondaymediasection.israel**

He asked: "Those arrested are as entitled to a fair trial as a shoplifter or someone who had actually committed a crime as serious as murder. So what happened to our contempt of court laws?"

The media acted as they did, he says, because they felt protected in a number of ways. One was the number of arrests made:

**The courts have acknowledged in a series of cases that even prejudicial material published at the time of arrests fades in the minds of potential jurors, so ensuring a fair trial (where defendants can still be assumed to be innocent unless proved otherwise). With so many possible defendants here, even massively prejudicial allegations (such as the discovery of a martyrdom tape) does not, it can be argued, taint every member of such a large group.**

There was also the international dimension of the alleged terror plot, "with government officials in Pakistan and the US releasing information about the plot and those associated with it":

**Such announcements are given protection in libel law of qualified privilege – as they are for the good purpose of providing the public with appropriate information – so there is no risk of a libel claim from any of the suspects.**

However, "If those seized are not convicted, huge libel claims are a very real possibility":

**The law of contempt can punish British newspapers for reporting foreign officials' comments about ongoing criminal cases, but the Human Rights Act equation is firmly on the side of freedom of expression. The intrusions into the private life of the suspects, and the risk to their right to a free trial, have to be balanced against hundreds of thousands who have had their flights disrupted and who are entitled to know why now, rather than in a couple of years' time.**

The problem here is that what is taught in media law books and courses is out of line with what the media actually do. You must know the law, but also follow the guidance of your editor, once you have one. Many editors make their judgements on what they are reasonably sure of. If they are convinced a person is guilty then they are inclined to say more than they would in a less clear-cut case. But such a strategy has proved very expensive for some newspapers who have assumed guilt in very high-profile cases and subsequently been proved wrong.

If a case has been notorious you may well have covered it in the past. Other cases come to your attention first only when they come to court. If you spot an interesting case, then you need to find out all you can about it. Check what, if anything, has been written before. If it is a really big case you may need to gather material for telling the full story once the court case has finished. Such pieces are known as backgrounders. While gathering material for them you must be very careful not to be in contempt of court. If you interview people who will later be witnesses in the court case you might affect how they deliver their evidence. Perhaps they exaggerate for your benefit, then feel they must stick with the exaggeration when giving evidence.

### *At the event*

Courts are very strict on how you can report on them. Most won't let you record proceedings, so shorthand is vital. You certainly can't photograph or video or record audio in a court for live or later transmission.

They also don't like pictures to be taken in what they call the precincts of the court – that's generally interpreted to mean that the building shouldn't be visible in a picture. This rule is regularly flouted. Reporters often deliver a piece to camera with the court's sign prominent in the background. Once again, once you are in a job follow your employer's guidelines.

You may well want to get stills or video of key people in a trial – defendants if they are on bail, victims, lawyers. If you do, know your publication's policy on such material.

Text is key to court reporting. You will have to take a clear note of proceedings whether it is to be printed, published as text online or used as the basis of an audio or video report.

Your report must be fair, accurate and published contemporaneously. Fair means you give both sides, even if a person is found guilty; accurate, that you have not introduced any errors; and contemporaneous means published as soon as possible. If you are on a website, that's going to be the same day probably, if on a paper or a magazine, then in the next available issue.

There'll be a list of cases scheduled for the day pinned up in the court, and you can get a copy – sometimes for free, sometimes for a charge, depending on the policy of the particular court. In magistrates' courts the list is subject to change, depending on the duties of defence and prosecution, and the presence of defendants and witnesses. Crown court lists vary much less, because cases tend to be longer and have time slots allocated to them.

The case list will give you the name and age of defendants and details of what they are charged with. Some courts add further details, such as when and where the alleged offence occurred.

If you are covering crown court, you are likely to have been sent there with a particular case in mind. At magistrates' court you are likely to be going through the lists to see which cases look the most interesting.

A large number of defendants plead guilty in magistrates' courts, and cases are often dealt with swiftly.

### Who's who

At a magistrates' court there may be a salaried district judge sitting alone, or a number of unpaid volunteer magistrates, also known as justices of the peace. One will be the chairman and will do most, if not all, of the talking.

Then there are the magistrates' clerks – one or more, who are responsible for running the court and advising magistrates on points of law, and who sit at a desk in front of the bench.

Lawyers – for prosecution and defence – sit facing the bench. They stand when addressing the bench. Everyone stands – including you – when the district judge or magistrates enter or leave the courtroom.

Defendants stand in the dock, which can be either behind the lawyers or to one side, or may sit beside the defence solicitor. Sometimes a barrister defends. With very minor cases, such as petty traffic offences, defendants usually don't attend.

Witnesses give their evidence from a witness box, which is usually on one side of the court and towards the front. Witnesses do not enter court before they have given their evidence, for fear that they will be tempted to change their story to fit in with what they hear, but they can stay after they have been dealt with. Don't talk to witnesses outside the court before they have given evidence.

You sit on the press bench, which is usually to one side of the court. Probation officers may have their own bench or share yours.

At a crown court a judge will sit on the bench, and there will be benches for the jury, who are called in for more serious cases where a not guilty plea has been entered. Juries decide guilt, judges mete out punishment once the jury has decided.

Youth courts, which deal with defendants under the age of 18, are much less formal. Special panels of magistrates sit at them. The public are not allowed here, but journalists are. There is an automatic ban, in almost all cases, against naming not just the defendant, but any other young person involved in the proceedings, including witnesses. There are a number of strict rules as to what details you can give to avoid identifying them. You can't name the school they go to, for example, or their parents, because that would make it very easy for them to be identified.

The vast majority of cases are tried at the magistrates' court. Only the relatively low number of more serious crimes go to the crown court – and all of those begin at the magistrates'.

There are a number of essential facts you must get – and get absolutely right – when covering court. For anything but a very short report you will need:

- The defendant's name and address, so that he or she is clearly identified
- Their marital status, family situation, age and job
- What they are charged with
- Any previous convictions
- The names of magistrates or judge, so you can attribute any quotes they give when passing sentence
- Any good quote given when passing sentence or during the case
- The names of prosecuting and defending lawyers, so you can attribute their quotes
- Any good quotes from them
- The names and addresses of witnesses
- Any good quotes from witnesses
- Anything said in mitigation by defence lawyers before sentence is passed
- The sentence.

Court cases follow a clear procedure. First the charges are read out and a plea is taken from the defendant – they say whether they are guilty or not guilty of those charges.

If they plead guilty, things are very straightforward. The prosecution outlines the nature of the offence, the defence speaks in mitigation, and the magistrates or judge decide upon the sentence.

If the plea is not guilty, then the prosecution outlines the case against the defendant. Witnesses are called and give their evidence. The defence may cross-examine those witnesses, seeking to test what they have said.

Once the prosecution case is completed, the defence mounts its case. It also calls witnesses, who can be cross-examined.

Then prosecution and defence make their closing speeches. At a magistrates' court they have only those court officials to convince. But at a crown court, before a jury, they will be seeking to persuade its members to go with their version of events. The judge will then give his or her own summing up, which is designed as guidance for the jury.

The jury then retires to consider its verdict. Once they have returned and delivered it, the judge passes sentence.

With short cases in the magistrates' court, you are usually reporting the entire case in one report. In that case the report must be fair – give something from both sides.

But, if the case runs on, and you are reporting on it each day or even several times a day, you can only give an accurate summary of the segment you are reporting on in each web or print report. In that case, your duty of fairness means that, having reported on the prosecution's case against the defendant, you are duty bound to give something of the defence's answer to the case against them when it is presented. So, although reporters often don't attend all of a long court case, they need to dip in and out at appropriate moments to keep their report balanced.

### *After the event*

Once a verdict has been reached, there is no danger of us being in contempt of court, so we can run backgrounders, interviews and generally go to town on a person found guilty of a crime.

It's okay now for readers or others to express their opinions of the person who has been found guilty. For instance, a beaten wife can now express the view of her husband as an evil sadist – if he has been found guilty. It is okay to have comments on the web from readers and to discuss the case in forums.

### *Court reporting examples*

The Rhys Jones Cover It Live blog from the *Liverpool Daily Post* provides a comprehensive guide to how a long-running court case develops. This link takes you to it:

**http://www.liverpooldailypost.co.uk/liverpool-news/rhys-jones/rhys-jones-trial-live/**

From here you can follow the sequence from the swearing in of the jury to their final verdict.

Most cases are much shorter. The vast majority are concluded in the magistrates' court, and the vast majority of defendants plead guilty. This makes for a much simpler procedure. In such cases – the vast majority – a plea is entered and then the prosecution outlines the case. The defence makes its plea in mitigation – typically something along the lines of "my client deeply regrets what he did, he is now back with his wife and striving to put this transgression behind him".

Below are some typical magistrates' court cases.

**on the website**

- Find links to the full reports.

Here is one from the *Hastings Observer*. The case is a routine one of a person who steals from parked cars, but the punishment is unusual, and that's what the report begins with:

### Thief gets car park ban

**Magistrates slapped an unusual ASBO on prolific crook D––- N––-, 27, who admitted stealing from parked cars.**

**It prohibits him from setting foot in any public or private car park, with the threat of jail if he does.**

Although the report is short and the accused admitted the charges, there is still something from his defence solicitor.

Here's a court case from *Lancaster Today*. It's a straightforward drink driving case, except that a very young child was in the car:

### Mum caught drink driving while picking daughter up from nursery

**A MORECAMBE mum was caught picking up her daughter from nursery while nearly four times over the drink-drive limit, a court heard.**

In this case there is a good deal in the short report from the defence, because the reasons for the offence are what is interesting. The defendant is said to have been drinking the night before, not during the day, and had turned to alcohol to deal with a messy divorce and an abusive husband.

Magistrates' court cases are often very compelling little dramas. In a couple of hundred words you get a portrait of folly, loss, despair, greed or stupidity.

6B13

## Exercises and projects

### Exercise 1

Set up your research tools. Develop RSS feeds, Google alerts, Technorati blog searches, Delicious bookmarks and subscribe to Twitter. Over time, remove links that turn out not to deliver, and add others you discover that might.

### Exercise 2

Follow a fast-developing news story over a day and post tweets at appropriate points.

### Exercise 3

Look out for the next major story around the world that involves many people in a serious plight. It might be a natural disaster or man-made calamity. Follow the story as it develops over at least one day. Observe how Twitter, streaming video and other methods are used, both by professional journalists and citizens caught up in events.

### Exercise 4

Find a willing interviewee who is interesting for one or more reasons, and a number of journalistic colleagues. Take it in turns to interview the person. Leave it up to each individual what questions they ask. Tape or film yourselves and play the recordings back. How do you come across? How successful have you been in getting the full story and good quotes from your interviewee? Have others done better? Found better angles? Got better quotes? Write up a 500-word interview and compare your work with what others have produced.

### Exercise 5

Practise email interviewing in a similar way to the approach outlined in Exercise 4. Work on developing lists of questions and phrasing your questions so that you get good answers. Write up a 500-word interview and compare it with the work of your colleagues.

## Exercise 6

Go to the Rhys Jones murder trial blog on the *Liverpool Daily Post/Echo* site and familiarise yourself with the story. Imagine you are covering the case on a particular day and, taking the evidence presented, craft a 400-word story for that day's website or newspaper.

## Projects

1 Write a regular blog post that is based on the research you do while covering your beat, or the topics covered in the websites that you are running. Make it either a preview of what is to happen over that day, a best-of round-up of the reporting and comment of others, or a combination of the two.

2 Identify a major event in the area you cover and cover it intensively. The event might be an exhibition, a conference, trade fair, talent contest, carnival or other event with a lot of people to interview and plenty going on.

You should:

- Set up a dedicated area on your website for the project, with an index page at level two of your site navigation and a number of pages at level three
- Preview the event
- Broadcast live video from it
- Create text reports
- Create picture galleries or slide shows
- Conduct interviews.

3 Identify either a major press conference or a public meeting in the subject or area you cover. Find both if you can. If crime is an area you cover, a police appeal would be ideal. A major product launch would also be good, if appropriate. Or a meeting to discuss an issue of concern to residents of a particular area. Take as active a part as you can in the event. Ask questions. Make sure you have all the material you need for a comprehensive text report, plus video or audio interviews and other footage.

4 If court reporting is relevant to your projects, cover a range of magistrates' court cases, plus a major crown court case.

chapter seven

# *Publishing platforms for live reporting*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

How to build

- A Twitter-based breaking-news area
- A Cover It Live reporting platform
- A Qik or Flixwagon live video platform.

In the last chapter we worked on the material we would create, and for what media, at each stage of the story cycle. In this chapter we will look at how to develop our publishing platforms – our websites and blogs – to accommodate the new things we are now doing.

In Chapter Eight we shall look in detail at a couple of other areas – encouraging and managing user-generated content, running forums and sending email bulletins. We'll look at how to add those things to our site after that, in Chapter Nine.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- Links to the applications covered here
- Additional advice on how to use these applications
- Masterclasses on live multimedia reporting.

7B1

## Developing your website

First, let's do a bit of spring cleaning on the Webs site we created in Part A. We are going to need more space on it and to scale things up, so let's look at the structure we created and build on it. You are limited to 20 pages before Webs starts charging you, so you can either start paying and support a larger site, or keep creating 20-page sites under separate accounts. For now we'll stick to 20 pages.

Remember that our home page is crucial and everything must start there. We want to keep some breaking news on the home page because it is very important to the site, but we want to offer the best of all other areas of our site here too. So, while we will have a couple of the biggest news stories on the home page, the rest of our news index will be moved to a new News page at level two in our navigation.

Level two will also have main or index pages for the other main areas of the site. I'm adapting and creating these pages:

- News
- Video
- Live Coverage
- News Focus
- Photo Galleries
- Podcasts
- Forums.

You will have others you want to include. If you are running a wide-ranging news site perhaps you want a Sport page at level two. If it's a B2B site there will be areas of the industry you cover that deserve their level-two index pages.

Here's how our top nav bar will look once we have created those main level-two pages:

Those, together with our individual story pages – which now appear at level three of our navigation – will pretty much take us to the 20-page limit on free content on Webs.

So I'm going to overhaul the home page, and make sure that it works to drive traffic to each of those level-two pages. I'll put my top news stories there, but also provide a link to what is now my main news index page, plus descriptive links to the best things I am featuring in my other level-two pages. I'm going to use my three-column grid to good effect by

placing my main news stories in the wide central column, and using the two side columns to promote my multimedia content.

Here's what my home page will look like once I have populated it:

Multimedia Journalism
Home News Video Live Coverage News Focus Photo Galleries Podcasts Forums
NEWS HEADLINES Baghdad blast kills 19...Cornwall flood fear...Post Office raid arrests
VIDEO NEWS
Lunchtime bulletin
The headlines at 1pm
PODCASTS
Can you feed a family of four on £1?
Listen here
PHOTO GALLERIES
City Music Festival:
all the performers and all the action in our exclusive gallery
NEWS: TOP WORLD STORY
Baghdad blasts kill 19
Two car bombs in different parts of the Iraq capital have killed at least 19 people, say police. More...
NEWS: TOP HOME STORY
Flood fear in Cornwall
Serious flooding is feared in the Cornish town of Looe, following a breach of sea defences yesterday. More...
NEWS: TOP LOCAL STORY
Post office raid suspects caught
Police appeals for witnesses to last Tuesday's armed post office raid in Armley have led to three arrests. More...
READ ALL THE LATEST NEWS As it happens...
LIVE REPORTS
Decision time for radical new town centre redevelop ment plan. Follow the debate, blow by blow live from 9.30am
Football
City vs United:
live, ball-by-ball commentary from Gary Finlake
Kick-off: 7 pm
FORUMS
Have your say

You'll notice how important pictures and graphics are in making a page look lively and attractive. Wiki Commons is a good place to look for royalty-free images. Using colour – sparingly – in your text can also help the look of your site.

As the home page is our shop window, we want to use it to promote our best content as powerfully as we can. As we have a lot of multimedia content – including recorded video, photo galleries and podcasts, plus live video and live text reporting, we want to make that clear to the reader.

7B2

## Adding a Twitter breaking-news area

**on the website**

- There are seminars on how to use Twitter and links to a range of advice. Register at Twitter **www.twitter.com** and you get the option to add your Twitter feed to your blog.

## *Twitter on your blog*

If you are using Blogger or one of the other main blogging platforms it's just a question of clicking a button to have the code added. Once it's there, you are ready to start filing. The widget you load into your page has a link for readers to use if they want to follow your tweets. You can also edit the code, for instance by going in and changing "follow me" to follow the name of your website.

WRITE, EDIT, BLOG
MULTIMEDIA JOURNALISM FROM ANDY BULL
MONDAY, 12 JANUARY 2009
Time to start a newspaper
When stocks are low, you buy. When newspaper stocks are low, you start a newspaper. At least, that's what Seth says. And here's how he suggests it can be done.
TWITTER UPDATES
Just doing the 10,000 Words quizHow new media are you? Answer, not as n.m. as you think you are... 28 minutes ago
Following the war in Gaza via

## *Twitter on your website*

When you are registering, click on the **Other** button below the links for Blogger etc., then opt for either the **flash** or the **html** option and you get some code. Load that into your Webs home page on one of the narrow columns to left or right.

You'll see that there is an option to load tweets not just from yourself but from your friends. If you open a dedicated account for colleagues on your journalism course you could all add breaking news to this Twitter feed.

**7B3**

# Adding live text reporting to your website

You need to join a free service such as Cover It Live to do this:

**www.coveritlive.com**

Once you are a member you can start as many live sessions – which they call blogs – as you like. You embed code they generate for you where you want it on your site. There are good tutorials on the site on doing this, and a useful practice area which means you can practise live reporting without anyone seeing your mistakes.

The Cover It Live interface is quite large, and is best placed on its own page, which you can link to from your home page, individual stories or from anywhere else that seems appropriate.

Cover It Live asks you to give your session a title, a start time and then generates the code you need. In your Live Coverage page write a headline and some explanatory text about the event, then paste the code in. You'll see there are several options to add functionality to your live session. You can allow moderated or unmoderated comment from readers, and enlist the help of what Cover It Live calls producers, who can moderate that content on your behalf. You can put up instant polls to see what readers think about the story as it develops. You can also embed Ustream, Mogulus or Qik live video coverage, which means you can stream the event live, supplementing what readers see with your own comment and additional information.

That means you could have a live debate going on in text while readers are shown streaming video of an event taking place.

**on the website**

- Find examples of how Cover It Live is being used.

7B4

## Adding live video to your website

As we mentioned in Chapter Four, you can broadcast live to the web or your blog from your mobile phone. You sign up to a service such as Qik, at **www.qik.com**, or Flixwagon, at **www.flixwagon.com**, by registering your mobile phone number with the service and receive a code for embedding your video channel into a website or blog. The live broadcasts you make are also recorded and stored on the service, so that you can link to each of them after the live event, if you wish, and keep them available to your readers.

You can embed the code that contains your video interface on its own page, as a blog post or on the front page of your site. Here's my Qik one as it appears on my blog:

7B5

## Exercises and projects

### Exercise 1

Find examples of the use of the following on the web:

1 Twitter
2 Cover It Live
3 Qik, Flixwagon or another live video interface.

With each, analyse the situations in which they are used:

- How well does the technology serve the event or story that is being covered using it?
- How effectively has the reporting been carried out?

### Projects

1 Add a Twitter breaking-news area to your blog and/or website.

2 Add Cover It Live to your website or blog and cover a live event using it.

3 Add Qik, Flixwagon or another live video interface to your website and/or blog.

chapter eight

# *User-generated content and email bulletins*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

- How to obtain, encourage and manage user-generated content
- The value of email bulletins to readers and publishers.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- A wealth of links and further information
- Masterclasses on user-generated content.

User-generated content (UGC) is the holy grail of many publications on the web. Publishers are desperate to get it for a couple of reasons. One is that if you develop a community where your readers/users love to come and chat with each other you have a site that is very sticky – it encourages people to come back. Second, it is generally believed that content produced by users, rather than journalists, is free content. And all publishers like the idea of getting something for nothing. Adding interactive elements to online stories can generate additional news stories.

But it's not as easy to obtain UGC – particularly good-quality UGC – as many publishers assume. Many readers are reluctant to provide it, and a lot of what is provided is of poor quality. And poor-quality content doesn't attract anyone.

Let's look at UGC in more detail, and at how it must be managed and developed if our conversation with the reader is to be a rich and rewarding one from both sides.

First, what is it?

8B1

## What user-generated content is

UGC can take various forms. At its simplest, the reader is unaware that they are providing it. Such UGC is a by-product of being on the site. So, a list of the most popular stories is generated without the people who read those stories doing anything. Here's how the Times Online does it:

MOST READ
MOST COMMENTED
MOST CURIOUS
TODAY
Airbus sends crash team to New York after...
US Airways Airbus A320 crash lands in New...
Football's top 50 rising stars
Amanda Knox appears in court as Meredith...

And here's the BBC's version:

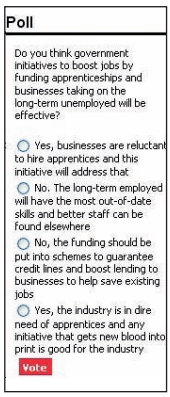
MOST POPULAR STORIES NOW
E-MAILED
READ
WATCHED/LISTENED
1 Three million hit by Windows worm
2 Man refuses to drive 'No God' bus
3 Zimbabwe rolls out Z$100tr note
4 How do you land a plane on water?
5 ATM's 'double your money' error

These grabs were taken at the same time on the same day, and show the difference in what the sites contain and/or what readers are interested in.

If you buy a book on Amazon you are told what other books were bought by those who purchased the one you just have. Many e-commerce sites aim to offer you recommendations, based on your actions and purchases. News sites could do that, but they don't tend to.

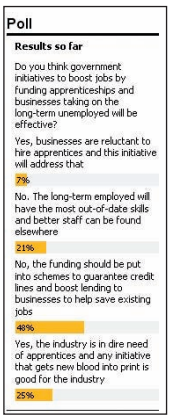
You could ask readers to vote for the stories they like best, and that involves them taking action. They'd know they were contributing to the site. You could make that contribution easy. Let them hover their cursor over a row of stars and click on the number of stars they want to award to the story.

The next level of UGC requires readers to do a bit more. For example, you give readers the opportunity to comment on a news story by adding their reactions below it. Or you invite them to vote on a topic – often one that is in the news. Here's a voting opportunity from Print Week:


Poll
Do you think government initiatives to boost jobs by funding apprenticeships and businesses taking on the long-term unemployed will be effective?
Yes, businesses are reluctant to hire apprentices and this initiative will address that
No. The long-term employed will have the most out-of-date skills and better staff can be found elsewhere
No, the funding should be put into schemes to guarantee credit lines and boost lending to businesses to help save existing jobs
Yes, the industry is in dire need of apprentices and any initiative that gets new blood into print is good for the industry
Vote

**http://www.printweek.com/**

Vote, and here's the result you get:


Poll
Results so far
Do you think government initiatives to boost jobs by funding apprenticeships and businesses taking on the long-term unemployed will be effective?
Yes, businesses are reluctant to hire apprentices and this initiative will address that
7%
No. The long-term employed will have the most out-of-date skills and better staff can be found elsewhere
21%
No, the funding should be put into schemes to guarantee credit lines and boost lending to businesses to help save existing jobs
48%
Yes, the industry is in dire need of apprentices and any initiative that gets new blood into print is good for the industry
25%

That's great as far as it goes, but the voter could be drawn into further discussion, by having a link from the poll results take them to a forum with an appropriate discussion thread. A poll also offers a follow-up news story for the site and magazine.

Here's an example of reader comments tagged to a new story, this from the *Morning Advertiser*:

Then there is community involvement. We invite readers to join groups or contribute to forums. The levels after that require more effort from the contributor. We might ask them to write a review of a product or service that will sit alongside reviews from professional journalists. The website of *Stuff* magazine, www.stuff.tv, does that.

We can allow them to upload their own pictures, videos and audio to the site. Sky News, **www.news.sky.com**, does that.

Send Us Your Videos And Photos
CHOOSE YOUR NEWS
HELP
You can send your videos, photos and news stories to Sky News in several ways.
From your mobile phone:
Dial 84501 to send texts, pictures and videos from your mobile.
By Email:
Email news@sky.com to send photos or video.

**http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/Send-Sky-News-Your-Videos-And-Photos/Article/200806415016545?lpos=Home_1&lid=ARTICLE_15016545_Send%2BSky%2BNews%2BYour%2BVideos%2BAnd%2BPhotos**

So does Kent News, a multiplatform enterprise that combines a collection of eight free newspapers, websites and web TV channels, which I think is probably a model for the way local news will be covered in future. The main URL is here:

**http://www.kentnews.co.uk/**

Such user-generated content can add to the richness of a site. On certain occasions – when there is a big news story that is inaccessible to professional reporters, or one that is simply too large to be covered in sufficient detail – UGC is fantastically valuable. You see it coming into its own during terrorist attacks and major disasters.

But what if we allow readers to do all this and they don't? The UGC element of our site is still-born. And if it is a flop when we launch, then it's going to be very hard to get things going later. A lack of UGC is particularly evident in forums, where, without readers' contributions, very little happens.

**on the website**

- See which are the stories that generate the most UGC.

8B2

## Encouraging and managing user-generated content

There is such a thing online as what you might call First Person At The Party Syndrome. Ever been the first to arrive at a party? You are tempted to back quietly out the door and only come back when the place has filled up a bit. Many forums are like that. You find just a handful of people there – sometimes none. You find that hardly anyone contributes to the forums, and that their contributions aren't interesting. Communities must be nurtured.

When the Saga group of companies – which sells holidays, insurance and other services to the over-50s and also publishes a glossy magazine – decided to create a website with a strong community/UGC element it left nothing to chance. It had 13,000 volunteer users populating the site, to be called Saga Zone, for four months prior to launch. So, on day one, when the general public could use it, the site was packed with material – blogs, discussions, members' profiles and much more.

The B2B website BrandRepublic said this:

> **Saga Zone, specifically designed for those over 50, has already attracted 30,000 loyal customers since it was launched in October last year and its success is the latest proof that pensioners have become one of the driving forces on the internet.**

Which?, the consumer group, tested 10 of the most popular social networking sites – those where like-minded internet users can chat online, share photos and gossip.

While Bebo, Flickr and Facebook are the top three, Saga Zone is fourth and gets top marks for performance and is rated the best site for discussion groups.

If you are to nurture a community you need someone to do it. That's where the people called – variously – community hosts, forum moderators or community reporters and editors come in. We'll look at those in detail later. First, there is another problem that we need to mention, user inequality.

8B3

## User inequality

The other problem is that most users don't participate very much. They are lurkers. Jakob Nielsen comes up with these figures:

- 90 per cent of your users never contribute
- 9 per cent contribute occasionally
- 1 per cent contribute frequently.

**http://www.useit.com/alertbox/participation_inequality.html**

Why is that a problem?

Because a tiny minority, who may not have lives, dominate. If you want to get a good, accurate sense of a community's interest in a subject, it can be hard. The few make a lot of noise; the majority is pretty much silent. So one small subgroup dominates. You get a biased understanding of the community. That matters, says Nielsen, because "many differences almost certainly exist between people who post a lot and those who post a little".

And you would never hear from the silent majority of lurkers – the mute majority who are your typical readers.

Nielsen has some interesting points to make about the UGC on Amazon: "At the time I wrote this, 167,113 of Amazon's book reviews were contributed by just a few 'top-100' reviewers; the most prolific reviewer had written 12,423 reviews. How anybody can write that many reviews – let alone read that many books – is beyond me, but it's a classic example of participation inequality."

In short, "online reviews represent only a tiny minority of the people who have experiences with those products and services" and "discussion groups drown in flames and low-quality postings, making it hard to identify the gems. Many users stop reading comments because they don't have time to wade through the swamp of postings from people with little to say."

8B4

## The role of the community reporter, editor and host

So what do we do about the difficulties of getting good contributions from as wide a range of readers as we can? We act like the editors that we are and recognise that we have to apply our editorial skills to encouraging, sifting and presenting UGC. Web purists will tut, but never mind. We also recognise that a certain amount of inequality will always be with us. Nielsen says: "Your only real choice here is in how you shape the inequality curve's angle."

We try to encourage contributions from more readers, so that we end up with, say, 80 per cent who never contribute, with 15 per cent contributing some and 5 per cent contributing the most. Here is what we do:

### *Make it easy to contribute*

The less effort is required, the more people will contribute. So, clicking on a star rating is very easy.

Being more ambitious, you can pose a question that only takes one click to cast a vote. But, once a reader has voted, invite them to click through to a forum that is discussing the subject they have just voted on. Saga Zone does that, encouraging a reader who is not that familiar with making contributions to a website with an easy way of taking the next step. Hit a controversial topic that your readers have strong feelings about, and you maximise the chances of getting them further involved.

Let's take an example.

Say a plan has been hatched to introduce congestion charging in a city that you cover. You have a news story on the subject and, if the story has been a long-running one, perhaps an area of the website devoted to the topic that readers can easily find from your site's home page. Ask readers to vote. Pose a simple, clear question that they can give a yes or no answer to.

**Congestion charging – tell us what you think**

Should motorists pay to come into the city at busy times? Yes
No

The next step will depend on how good the software is that you are using for polls but, if it lets you, add a hypertext link from the result they see once they have cast their vote to a forum on the topic. (We'll look in detail at how to set up and run forums in Chapter Nine.)

The problem on a busy forum is that the good comments get lost in a welter of so-so ones. If readers can't find them, they are less likely to get involved with the discussion that is going on and to contribute to it themselves. So you should find the good comments and highlight them. You can pick them out and add them to a Best Forum Posts area either on your site's home page or on what we might think of as your communities home page. Doing this rewards good participants. Pick the best news story comments, forum posts, blog posts, submitted stills and video and tell readers about them – in the forums area, at other places on the site where UGC is asked for, in your email bulletin and in your print publication.

Nielsen has another great idea: "Promote quality contributors. If you display all contributions equally, then people who post only when they have something important to say will be drowned out by the torrent of material from the hyperactive 1 per cent. Instead, give extra prominence to good contributions and to contributions from people who've proven their value, as indicated by their reputation ranking. You might give them stars by their profile, like the sellers on eBay get."

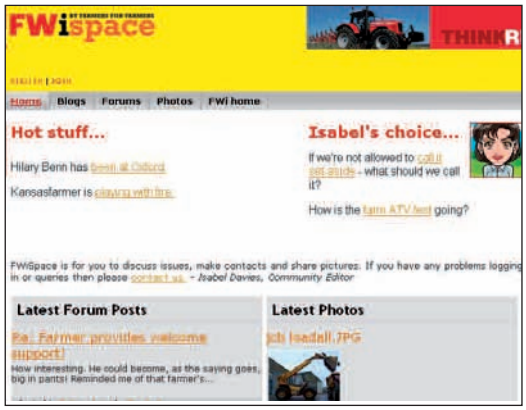
## *The role of the community reporter*

This all takes time and effort, and has led to the creation of a new type of journalist called the community editor or reporter. *Farmers Weekly*, a B2B magazine that is called Farmers Weekly Interactive online, is a good example:

**http://www.fwi.co.uk/Home/**

It has a community editor, Isabel Davies. Her choices appear on the community home page:

**http://www.fwi.co.uk/community/default.aspx**


FWispace
THINK
Home
Blogs
Forums
Photos
FWi home
Hot stuff...
Hilary Benn has
Kansasfarmer is
Isabel's choice...
If we're not allowed to
what should we call it?
How is the
going?
FWiSpace is for you to discuss issues, make contacts and share pictures. If you have any problems logging in or queries then please
- Isabel Davies, Community Editor
Latest Forum Posts
Re: Farmer provides welcome support!
How interesting. He could become, as the saying goes, big in pants! Reminded me of that farmer's...
Latest Photos

Communities really come into their own when a big story affects the readers. This happened for FWi during a major outbreak of foot and mouth disease. Isabel Davies told *Press Gazette* that the magazine's online communities helped the title get vital information out to readers during that outbreak, and helped her hear back from those affected:

**http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=6&storycode=38579**

Isabel told *Press Gazette*: "The job of community editor is a new post . . . and a lot of it is about championing the voice of the reader. It really worked in this instance – they've asked questions and we've used our influence to get them answers."

It's pretty clear that, particularly in extremis, farmers – or any community – will go to the home they trust. The challenge for B2B magazines is to create those homes, to nurture them and keep them their own. Do it well and you *can* own them, do it badly and others will take on the job instead. The community will do what customers in a pub that goes downhill do – they find a nicer place to meet.

Isabel says this about her role: "A lot of it is about championing the voice of the reader." So, another of the skills required of a modern multimedia journalist is the ability to run a community. That means caring about the community, being a part of it, getting involved in what it does and using what you learn to inform your reporting.

When you set up a poll, monitor the comments. Select the best ones and promote them. Use the poll result as the basis for another news story. With the congestion charging example you can get a main story out of a poll that shows 80 per cent of readers oppose congestion charging.

The community reporter is looking for stories that get readers going. Stories that provoke a strong emotional response are often the ones to generate reader comment.

## *Find the Big Conversations*

What we are looking for is what I'm calling the Big Conversations. These are the subjects that readers really care about and want to discuss. What these Big Conversations are will differ depending on your readership.

### questions

What matters to the readers of the sites you have created? What Big Conversations ought there to be on your forums?

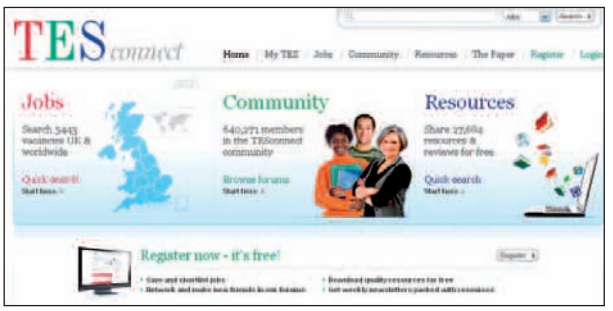
Really effective UGC-rich sites take those Big Conversations – and the needs of their readers – very much into account when they plan the site, what it contains and how it can be used. TESconnect, the online version of the *Times Educational Supplement*, is what I consider to be a trail blazer because, although it comes from a print publication that is news driven, it has found a strong identity online. Look at its home page and you'll see what I mean:

**www.tesconnect.com**

TESconnect is a great model for what can be done with UGC.

Many websites are news driven. Indeed, one of the key distinctions publishers draw between their print and web publications is that fast, breaking news goes online, and more considered or feature-type or analytical coverage goes in print.

TESconnect is different. The content of the print magazine is still there, and so is news, but the site is actually focused on the readers – their needs and contributions. And it has (or had when I wrote this) nearly 870,000 members in its community. That's incredible. Many communities are much smaller.



In an interview with the Online Journalism Blog, the TES's Edward Griffith explained how the site came to be as it is.

## on the website

- Find a link to the full interview on the website.

He said:

> Someone noticed in the forums there were two big conversations going on. People were seeking support and ideas from each other. Second was sharing teaching tools and resources. So we thought, hang on, there are over half-a-million teachers, and there aren't that many classes, so we thought: what can we do?
>
> We had a resources section, but it was a bit of a dog. So we developed a prototype resources sharing tool, and it went through the roof. It's grown 200% y-o-y ever since.
>
> The really weird thing was that, in some focus groups we ran, teachers were telling us how isolated they were. They were spending a huge amount of time planning their lessons in the evenings and at weekends, and doing it all alone.
>
> Link that with what the teachers are looking for in the forums, and we've got the premise for the biggest single professional social network in the UK.

It's worth looking in a little more detail how TESconnect does this. First, go to the site and see how it welcomes users. It's worth registering – there is content that might help you while you are studying.

The site is friendly – it feels much more like the social network it is than a news site with a bit of UGC tacked on as an afterthought. It is a social network just as much as Facebook is, with the added advantage that almost all its members are in the same line of business. It lets them create a community, to find and invite friends, to create storage areas for all they find useful, email other members and create a profile.

## How to welcome the user

Here are the things we can do to welcome readers and encourage them to get involved. Of course, we need the software to do this, and many publishers don't have it yet. But my prediction is that TESconnect is a model for the way things are going, and that many sites are going to look like this in future. To nurture communities effectively, we need to be able to do all that is outlined below.

- **Watch the website and blog for updates on this.**

When they register and log on, give them a warm welcome – and their own home page:

1 Invite them to complete their profile

2 Enable them to find friends

3 Show them friends' activity

4 Allow them to comment – and see their total number of comments

5 Present links to popular posts

6 Let them select their favourites

7 Allow them to invite new people to the network

8 Show them a video and offer FAQs.

Depending on the nature of the site and their reasons for being there, do the following:

- Give them quick links to check those things – jobs, for example – that are important reasons for their being part of your community
- Encourage them to share
- Let them choose to make things public or private
- As they explore – guide them
- Ask: first time here?
- Ask: first time in forums?
- Ask: not posted a comment before?
- Ask: is this your first upload?
- Introduce yourself – as community reporter.

## *How a community builds*

Here's how a community builds organically on TESconnect. Edward Griffith says:

> **When the user has found a great piece of content, they click through to see the rest of the content from that user, friend them and subscribe to their friend feed.**
>
> **That's the million dollar moment for me, when the users add each other to their networks. And then they can rate the content.**
>
> **The user stuff is going to be more important. What's key for me is harnessing the creativity of half-a-million professionals who week-in, week-out are preparing and testing the resources in the classroom: that's the really valuable content for our users.**

Let's look at another example of a site where a Big Conversation has been identified. This one is on the publican's site **www.morningadvertiser.co.uk**.

The *Morning Advertiser* is very good at campaigning on behalf of its readers. It also gives them the tools they need to join the campaign. Take a look at the site. You'll see the current big issues for pubs prominently displayed. In recent years the ban on smoking was a very powerful driver of UGC. Threads on the smoking ban got dozens and dozens – sometimes hundreds – of responses.

What caught my eye at the time of writing was a campaign to reverse the then current increase in VAT on pub drinks. It is called Fight the Hikes:

**http://www.morningadvertiser.co.uk/news.ma/article/59643**

It offers these tools for users:

## GET INVOLVED

Follow these easy steps:

1. Download a **Fight the Hikes Poster** and put it up in your pub.
2. Download the **Fight the Hikes Petition** and get your regulars to join the campaign. Consumer support is vital.
3. Download **Extra Petition Sheets**.
4. Download the **Fight the Hikes Letter** and send it to your MP. It asks them to sign an EDM condemning the duty hikes, tells them about the campaign and invites them to the pub to discuss the issues first hand.
5. Find your MP's contact details **here**. Post or email him the letter.
6. Send your completed petitions to Fight the Hikes, Morning Advertiser, William Reed Business Media, Broadfield Park, Crawley, West Sussex, RH11 9RT.
7. Join the **Fight the Hikes Facebook group**.
8. Take a picture of you, staff and customers with the poster and petition and email it to **Ewan.Turney@william-reed.co.uk**.
9. Remember you can also **Ban the Chancellor from your pub by clicking here**.

Such ideas brought a steady stream of responses as readers did these things and others and told the *Morning Advertiser* about them.

### *Know your reader*

We spoke very early on about the vital importance of understanding your audience if you are to become a good journalist. Nowhere is that understanding more important than with generating, managing and encouraging good-quality UGC.

The New York journalism professor Jeff Jarvis said this in the *Guardian* about the importance of editors in what he terms mass collaboration journalism:

> I'm a believer in the role of the editor. The editorial voice still has a role, perhaps has an even more important role, in the world of mass collaboration. It's about point of view, but it's also about promoting what's out there. Even in today's world, an editor's view holds real credibility. If there's a few thousand people voting on a theme, it's the editor's power to take notice of it, organise it and promote that content.

**http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2008/aug/18/1**

What that means is, we can make UGC a part of the editorial process – not something that goes on in isolation from our other editorial content. This is particularly pertinent in B2B publications, where the readers can be viewed as a large body of experts in the field that the magazine and website cover. Their views, what they want to discuss and the comments they post are highly valuable.

At the FT, for example, Rob Grimshaw, FT.com's managing director, told MediaGuardian: "We're allowing users a lot of latitude. We think the users are smart intelligent people with lots of insight into their fields. We want to get all that insight onto FT.com."

**on the website**

- Find more on UGC, with comments and examples.

8B5

## Managing forums

There are two main aspects to this part of the forum-managing job, which, incidentally, might be part of the community editor or reporter's responsibilities, or might be a separate role. One is about being a good host, the other is about being a sort of community police officer – because not everyone is well behaved online. You need rules that encourage good neighbourliness, and to enforce them when users persistently overstep the mark and cause trouble.

### *How to be a good host*

Be there. If you don't show up at your own party, why should anyone else?

Find out more on how to be a good host at:

**http://blog.emoderation.com**

## *Moderating UGC*

Moderation is checking readers' contributions – from comments to blogs, submitted videos or other material – to ensure they are acceptable for publication. We need to do this for a number of reasons. For one, we don't want certain contributors spoiling the atmosphere and putting others off from contributing. For another, we don't want them breaking the law. If they break the law, we are breaking it too, because we are the publisher. If they defame someone, we defame them too. If they commit contempt of court, so do we. We'll look at the law further after we've considered moderation.

Moderation can take three forms:

1 **Pre-moderation**, where material is moderated before it becomes available to users. The community editor has seen it and decided it is suitable for posting. This approach is necessary on sites where the users are vulnerable – children, for example, or other sections of the community particularly vulnerable to abuse – or where the subject matter is particularly sensitive.

2 **Post-moderation**, where material is moderated after it is posted. The moderator effectively sweeps the site periodically, removing anything objectionable. This approach works for sites on which there is lively debate about current affairs.

3 **Reactive moderation**, where it is left to site users to alert the moderator to offensive or inappropriate material. This approach is really only suitable for communities where few breaches of acceptable publishing practice are found.

Most comment and forums software includes a button marked **Report this post**, or words to that effect, so that readers can alert the moderator to anything they find objectionable. This safeguard can be used in conjunction with any of the three approaches to moderation.

Not all sites are moderated, but not to moderate is to open yourself to legal risks. Also, if a user reports material but nothing is done about it, that reduces a community's trust in you.

## *The law on UGC*

The law on what is acceptable in UGC, and the responsibilities of the publisher for ensuring it is acceptable, is still being formulated and is confused. What we need to be aware of is the law of defamation. This is a good point to run through – it applies to all, but UGC throws up some additional things to be aware of and alert to.

I'll summarise some of the main points involved in the law of defamation and the dangers for online publication, including from UGC.

## on the website

- Find links to online defamation guides.

### *What defamation is*

Defamation includes both libel and slander. Slander is publication in a transient form – e.g. speech. Libel is in a permanent form.

### *Definition*

Defamatory material is that which is calculated to injure the reputation of another by exposing him or her to hatred, contempt or ridicule.

It can also be defined as a statement which is likely to diminish the subject "in the eyes of right-thinking people".

### *Essentials of defamation*

1 The words must refer to the person who believes he or she has been defamed

2 They must be published (in some cases with malice)

3 They must be defamatory or capable of being defamatory.

### *Main defences*

- **Justification**: it's true and I can prove it. Often a tall order. Will witnesses come to court?
- **Fair comment** on a matter of public interest
- **Absolute privilege**: it was said in parliament or court
- **Qualified privilege**: if it was said in a range of situations such as at a public meeting or press conference, in which case a fair and accurate report should be safe if published without malice and subject, on request, to a reasonable right of reply.

### *Responsibilities*

#### Editorial content

With editorial content generated by journalists, we are expected to know the law and adhere to it.

### UGC

With UGC we have a bit more leeway. If a defamatory statement is published by a user we should move "expeditiously" to remove or disable access to it. We aren't required to monitor content, but if we *are* monitoring it we are expected to spot and remove anything objectionable.

#### Archive

If it's still in the archive and someone clicks on it, you've republished it. So archives must be cleared of material that becomes defamatory. For example, the story from a police appeal we discussed in Chapter Six becomes defamatory and in contempt once the person is caught, so we must remove it or disable access to it.

### *When to intervene*

Many situations that require moderators to intervene don't involve actual lawbreaking, but rather upset the atmosphere in the forum. You don't want to stifle debate, but there are occasions when things get out of hand, or when some posters set out to abuse, bully or gratuitously insult other users. You can't allow racist, homophobic or otherwise threatening comments.

Your **Ts and Cs** – terms and conditions – should make plain what is acceptable and what is not. Think of them as house rules, an outline of what we consider acceptable behaviour. So read them and use them to moderate comment.

#### If users break the house rules

First warn them. Remove their comment. If it's a situation that could become controversial, tell users what you have done and why.

Often, unacceptable comments arise from users not knowing the law. They name a defendant who is, for example, protected because of their age, or the victim of a sexual assault. Such breaches of the law must be removed asap, but you can also educate users, and even possibly avoid such breaches in the future, by publicly pointing out why you have had to remove a post.

**on the website**

- Find a link to the BBC's guidance on moderating UGC.

8B6

## Writing an email bulletin

Regular email bulletins are very useful, for us and for readers. We like them because the reader doesn't have to remember to tap in our URL to get to our website. Instead, if they open the email bulletin they find heads and sells and can click from them straight into our site. Once there they can move around, or go back to select another story they like the look of.

Readers like them because they are reminders to check on the news we provide and because of the ease of use. But they won't sign up to receive them unless they value our site. Jakob Nielsen summarises email bulletins' appeal like this:

> **Newsletters feel personal because they arrive in your inbox; you have an ongoing relationship with them. In contrast, websites are things you glance at when you need to get something done or find the answer to a specific question.**
>
> **The positive emotional aspect of newsletters is that they can create much more of a bond between user and company than a website can.**

You should sign up to email bulletins that are useful for your research just as you do to RSS feeds.

### *Here's how you write one*

You'll be using a piece of software to write your email bulletin, and it will have been set up for you and probably require you to write a certain number of elements at a certain length. In Chapter Nine you'll find an example of one piece of free software on which you can create your bulletin. If you need it, it's there; if you don't, what follows will still apply to the software you have been given.

First thing is the subject line. This is the line that appears as the subject of the email. You have about 60 characters and you should use it to present a taster of the material to come. You don't need to say who you are because that will be in the **From** part of the line.

The first is a financial bulletin from *The Times*:

**KILL THE COMPETITION: Airlines unite . . . Dow chaos . . . Germany concedes**

This is from the publican's magazine the *Morning Advertiser*:

**Morning Advertiser: 'Refer beer tie to Competition Commission'**

Specific story teasers are much better than a generic line such as Breaking News, Latest Bulletin or News Update. Such labels don't tempt the reader with specifics and they are less likely to click through to read the content. Some subject lines are too long and only a fraction of the first news item is actually visible when you come to your emails. That's a lost opportunity to engage with the subscriber.

For example, this is from a B2B publication called *Construction News* (CN). The full subject line read:

**CN plus Daily Newsletter: Bam Construct wins £35m Olympic academy job . . . Three battle for historic hotel refurb . . . Carillion signs £550m Abu Dhabi deal . . .**

In my inbox this cut off after "Bam Construct . . .", so I only got one of the three news items they wanted to tell me about. Remove "CN plus Daily Newsletter", which is unnecessary because the **From** line has CN plus, and you have more space for actual content.

## *Once you get to the actual content of the bulletin . . .*

The golden rule is to keep email bulletins simple. You can offer the reader the choice of html or plain text bulletins, but many subscribers prefer plain text. Bulletins should not take any more time to skim through than an email would. They should be written for easy scanning. So the classic head and sell combination that we use for our online news story writing will be as effective with an email bulletin.

As with heads and sells on a home or main news page, readers must click on the link provided in the sell or the head to read the story. Once they do, they are on our site. They have got

there without having to type in our URL, which means that bulletins are a great way of keeping in touch with readers and encouraging them to return regularly to our site. You can just take heads and sells from your top news stories and other items. Or you can select the best of the blogs and the best comments from readers.

A site that has a strong community can list in its bulletin the top discussion threads on the forums, or the best reader comments and the best blog posts in addition to news.

But you don't have to restrict yourself to your own material. Some titles' bulletins contain news and comment from their rivals.



## questions

Why would we do this? Can you think of an upside and a downside to giving rivals' content publicity in our bulletin? Don't read on until you have considered.

The reason for doing so is that we know readers are busy and may well only subscribe to one bulletin that covers the sector we operate in, whether that is general news or a specialist area. We hope they will choose our bulletin, but we want to give them a good reason for choosing us over others, a reason above and beyond the quality of our own content. So we make our bulletin a comprehensive one. If it covers the opposition sufficiently thoroughly, then we hope that readers who could choose to subscribe to our rivals' bulletins will only subscribe to us. We save them time; we make their lives easier.

The downside is that we make them aware of rivals, who they can sample through us. If they prefer them, then we have lost them. The solution: be better than them.

To some this seems mad – you are inviting your readers to go elsewhere for their information. But we shouldn't be so defensive. The ethos of the web is openness. We let the reader go, indeed we help them shop around, in the belief that they will come back to us if we are offering the best.

And let's face it, these days fewer and fewer people read just one newspaper or magazine right through. They select what interests them from across the board, depending on their areas of interest. If they like politics they will want to read the main commentators from a range of titles. Email bulletins are one easy way of reading what we consider to be the best reporting, comment and other material from a wide range of publications. Some websites set out to do this – to aggregate by offering links to a wide range of content generated by others.

Here's that approach demonstrated by one of the bulletins we have already begun to look at – Kill the Competition.

*Kill the Competition*

What you get in the email subject line is:

**KILL THE COMPETITION: Airlines unite . . . Dow chaos . . . Germany concedes**

**Click through to:**

This has various headings and under each there are items from *The Times* and a couple of its major competitors. One heading is **Top stories**, and they come from *The Times*, the *New York Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*. Those stories in the example I am taking were as follows:

- *The Times*: Airlines EasyJet and Virgin Atlantic will team up to back a £2.5 billion ($3.7 billion) bid for Gatwick Airport, London's second airfield.

  **http://tinyurl.com/56h3nt**

- *New York Times*: The Dow fell 4 per cent in morning trade but finished almost 7 per cent above its opening mark in a chaotic day on Wall Street.

  **http://tinyurl.com/6o4k9k**

- *Daily Telegraph*: Germany became the first of the G7 powers to declare an official recession; it will almost certainly be followed by France and Italy.

  **http://tinyurl.com/6hxopb**

Another heading is **Comment**. Here are the stories under that heading on this occasion:

- *David Wighton in The Times*: Financial regulators had a rare opportunity to show that they are serious about cracking down on insider dealing. They fluffed it.

  **http://tinyurl.com/5n5xtl**

- *Floyd Norris in the New York Times*: Hopefully the rest of the US bailout will be handled carefully; the first handouts were made in a process that looks absurd.

  **http://tinyurl.com/5z5vj5**

- *Hamish McRae in the Independent*: With a recession looming, we need to work out if its shape will be a V, a W or a U – or, for the very pessimistic, an L.

  **http://tinyurl.com/68w8ja**

It goes on with selections from itself and its rivals in a number of different content categories.

But some bulletins don't take this form at all. Instead, they are rather like a blog, or even a traditional newspaper or magazine column. These can work too if the information you are giving is of value to the reader.

## How often should we send bulletins?

Email bulletins should be daily for a busy news site, weekly for a less busy one. If we are on a hobby site, then weekly is probably best. Any less than weekly and the reader forgets to look out for them. Send them too often, and they find them a nuisance. Send them more often than you can cope with, and you find you have to repeat stories – and that turns readers off very quickly.

## Subscribe and unsubscribe

Both should be easy. To get someone to subscribe, you can expect them to give you a little information. Their email address is clearly essential. We should not ask them for things they can't see the relevance of – their address and phone number, for example.

Unsubscribe should be really simple. Ideally, by simply clicking on an **unsubscribe** button. If it is any harder readers may decide not to unsubscribe formally, but simply to add you to their blocked senders list, and that's treating you like a spammer.

8B7

## Exercises and projects

### Exercise 1

Look at a wide range of sites and assess:

1 The quality and amount of UGC they contain

2 The Big Conversations readers are having, if any

3 How welcoming the communities area is for users, particularly new users

4 Whether there is a communities editor or host and how evident and effective they are.

### Exercise 2

Take two sites and monitor them over a period of four to five weeks. For both:

1 Produce an audit of their UGC

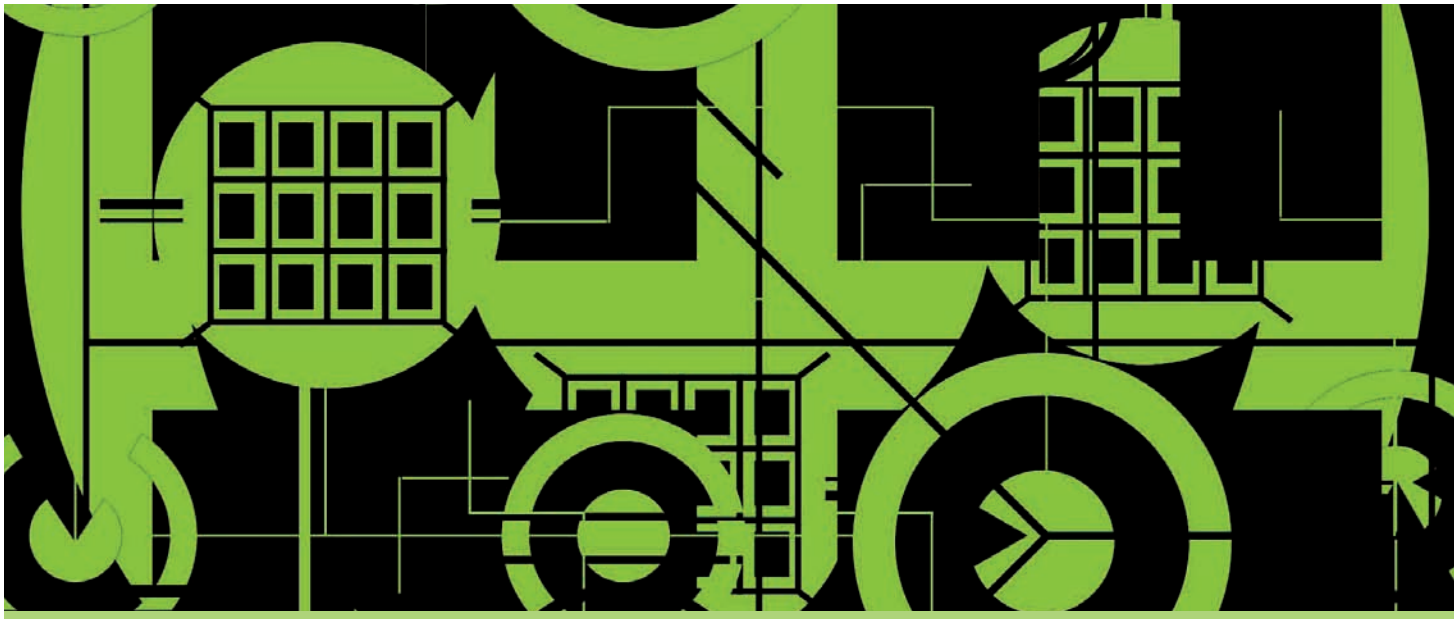
2 Develop a strategy for improving the amount of UGC the site has.

### Projects

We'll need to wait until the end of Chapter Nine to give you major projects in this area, but for now you can tackle these two:

1 Invite comment on stories, monitor that comment and promote good comment

2 Run regular polls.



chapter nine

# *Publishing platforms for user-generated content and email bulletins*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

- Using the Webs publishing platform to create forums
- Using the MailChimp publishing platform to create email bulletins.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

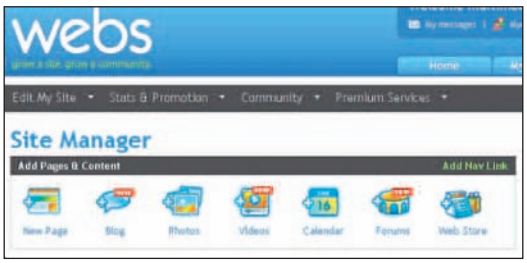
- Alternative starting points for forum hosting if you don't want to use Webs
- Video guides to building forums and email bulletins.

9B1

## Publishing platform for forums

The forums publishing platform on Webs is easy to use, and there is a useful tutorial on the website, but here is a quick run-through that should have your forums up and ready for posting in half an hour at most.

First, you add the forum application to your site, by clicking on the forum icon on the **Site Manager** screen. Once you have done that, you will be taken into the **edit** mode for the application.



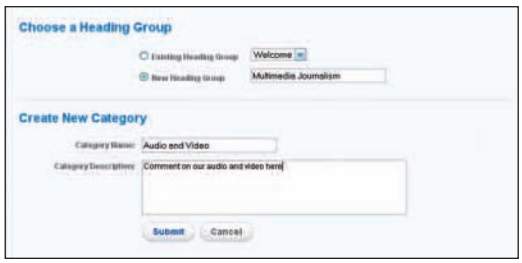

Forums are arranged with this hierarchy:

**Heading Group > Categories > Topics > Replies**

### *Adding categories*

Now you have a forums area, set up some categories by clicking on the **Add New Category** button. Categories are arranged under titles or what Webs calls **Headings**, so, on the **Add Category** page, you can choose whether you want to add the category under a current heading or create a new heading for the category.

As the forum host you will need to set up a range of appropriate categories that reflect the subject matter of your site and the interests of your users. As an example, I'll create a new **Heading Group** called Multimedia Journalism and then a category called Audio and Video, and I've added a description: "Comment on our audio and video here." What I'm doing is building a hierarchy, just as we do when we create a website. We start with the home page – the granddaddy page – and then work down the family to parents, children, grandchildren and so on.




Once I've done that and submitted it, this new heading and category are added to my forum. If I then click on the **New Topic** button I can add topics within this category.

My registered users can do the same, but I'm going to start things off and create a framework that will aid discussion. Each time I add a topic I must post on it. Once I have posted, then the topic is created and when subscribers read the post they get the opportunity to post a reply. I've created a topic called Video tips and tricks, and then posted advice on using a tripod.

Your skill as a community host will be in setting up suitable categories that reflect your readers' interests.

Users must register, by giving their email address and a password, before they can post. Once they have, when they come to the forum they can reply to posts, or flag them if they feel any are inappropriate. If they flag a post, you will see a message appear on the main forum page. You can either delete or unflag it.

**on the website**

- **There are many other ways to establish a forum. You can create one independently of your website or blog and its host if you like. You'll find some links relating to this on the website.**

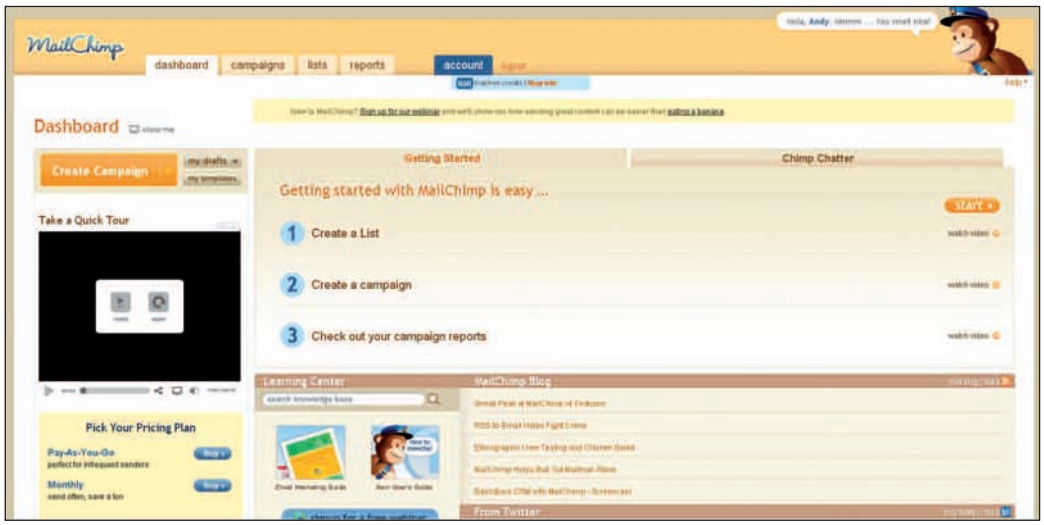
9B2

## Publishing platform for email bulletins

Webs doesn't have an email bulletins feature, but there are a number of bulletin – or newsletter – clients that you can use to create your bulletins. I'm going to use one called MailChimp

(**www.mailchimp.com**) for this demonstration. You can send up to 5,000 emails a month to up to 500 subscribers under MailChimp's Forever Free account option.

MailChimp takes you through the process of setting up your mailing list, naming your bulletin and so on, but here's a quick run-through. You set up your mail list then create your campaign.

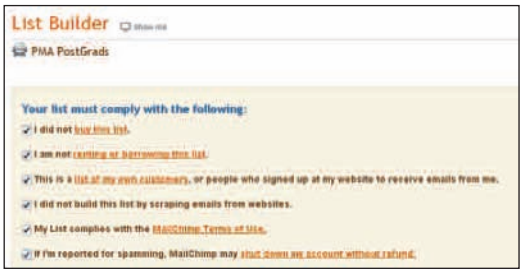



The procedure MailChimp takes you through in setting up your mailing list is a useful tutorial in how to make sure you are not spamming people – sending them communications they did not ask for. Follow the guidance there and you won't go wrong.

Build your signup form. This is where you ask subscribers for information about themselves. Keep what you ask to a minimum – just reasonable information that you need in order to send them the bulletin. Ask too much and you'll put them off subscribing. Ask for their email and first and last names and/or a user name. MailChimp generates the code for your signup form and you can paste this into your website.

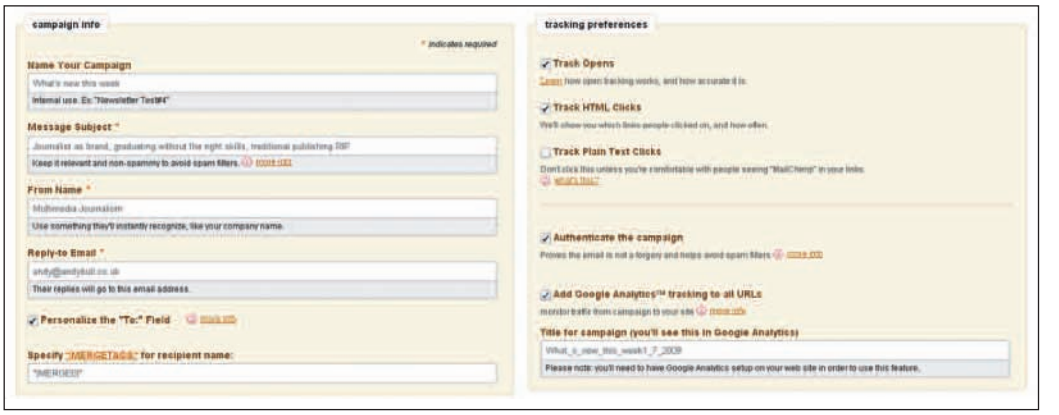
Next you add interest groups. This lets you target information at users who have expressed an interest in particular areas you cover. For now, keep it simple.

MailChimp asks you to confirm that you have the approval of everyone on your mailing list before you send them your bulletin. It is best to use your colleagues on the course for this to start with, unless you already have some willing subscribers.


List Builder
PMA PostGrads
Your list must comply with the following:
I did not buy this list.
I am not renting or borrowing this list.
This is a list of my own customers, or people who signed up at my website to receive emails from me.
I did not build this list by scraping emails from websites.
My List complies with the MailChimp Terms of Use.
If I'm reported for spamming, MailChimp may shut down my account without refund.

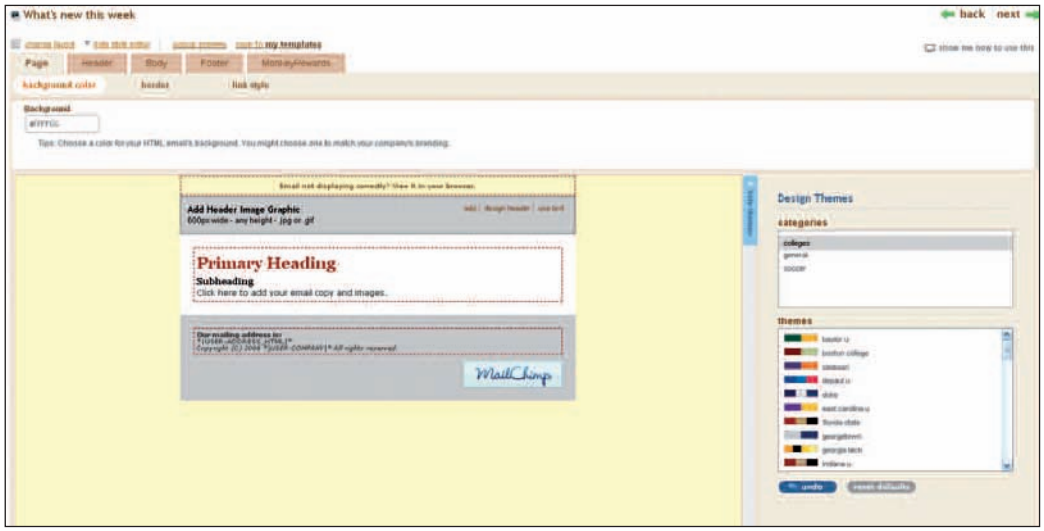
Then you create an Excel document from your names list and cut and paste that into MailChimp.

Once you have uploaded your list you move on to creating the content for the newsletter. MailChimp calls this your campaign. You give your email campaign a name, set a subject list – this is what appears in the subject of your email so remember what we said in Chapter Eight about getting the most out of this.



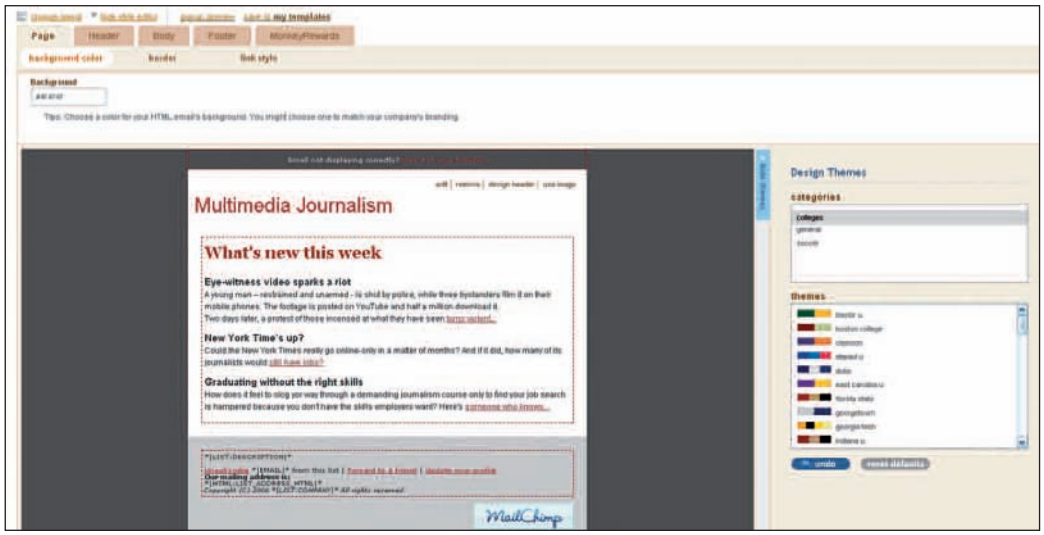

You'll see from this screen that MailChimp can track how many of your recipients open your bulletin, and what they click on once they have opened it. That gives you a clear indication of what items are popular.

Next you select a layout. You can preview them, but all are very simple, which is what most email bulletin recipients want, as we discussed in Chapter Eight. I've chosen the basic one, which looks like this:




The template appears with the various fields into which you can add your content. MailChimp looks at the colour palette on your website and applies those colours to the bulletin, but you can change them if you want to.

Next, I fill in the boxes on the template with the content I want to promote in the bulletin. Remember, the idea is to get readers to go through to your website – the bulletin is a promotional tool. So write sharp heads and sells and provide hypertext links to the full article or post in each case.



Once you are done, click on **next** and you are asked to paste a plain text version of your bulletin into a new template. You need this for those who don't want your html version.

Now you are ready to send your bulletin, but it's a good idea to click the **preview** button first to check all is as it should be. As one final test, click on the **send a test** button and send the bulletin to yourself, or someone who is prepared to check it over for you. Here's how the bulletin looks as it arrives in my email:

Open it and you can check the bulletin looks as you wanted it to, and that the links work.

The example here is a very simple one, but it is as easy to add images and other elements in MailChimp as it is in Blogger. For example, here's what happens if I cut and paste the main navigation content from one of my websites into the MailChimp template. All my material transfers straight across.

MailChimp
Campaign Builder
What's new on Classic Gardening
back
next
Design Themes
Classic Gardening Magazine
JOIN US FOR A GUIDED TOUR OF KEW GARDENS
Next year the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew celebrates its 250th anniversary.
Recently, I spent a fascinating day enjoying a behind-the-scenes tour of just about every aspect of the place, from the remarkable archives to the new treetop walkway and the hundreds of plants rescued from extinction. Most fascinating of all, I learned what Kew plans to do in the next 250 years.
I hope you enjoy the videos, slide shows and words that cover that day. I'll be adding to this posting over the next few days, and as I do the links below will go live.
Kew: The last 250 years
The herbarium and library
Text and pictures
Slide show
Aboard the Kew Explorer
A tour around the 132 hectare grounds
This is a Qik video that I streamed live during the trip
Up in the tree tops
A tour of the 18m high Rhizotron and Xstrata Treetop Walkway with Tony

## on the website

- Find a video tutorial on using MailChimp.

## Projects

1 Run forums and be active in them, beginning threads and contributing to them. You must:

- Set up a comprehensive grid of headings, categories and topics
- Get a group of users to post to the site to encourage others to take part
- Monitor for posts that deserve to be highlighted
- Get to know your community
- Look out for Big Conversations and reflect such interests and concerns in the content you produce.

2 Produce an email bulletin and publish it either daily or weekly, based on what is appropriate for your site. You will need to:

- Establish a subscriber list
- Design and populate a bulletin
- Send it to yourself and thoroughly test it
- Publish it to your subscribers.

## on the website

- Ask us to subscribe to your bulletin and get our feedback.

chapter ten

# *Still pictures and audio*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

- How to get the best out of a digital SLR camera
- Creating audio slide shows.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- Videos that take you step by step through mastering a digital SLR camera
- Links to the videos and other material discussed here, plus additional resources.

A digital SLR (single-lens reflex) camera is a more advanced piece of kit than your average point-and-shoot mobile phone camera, or indeed a basic snapshot digital camera, and allows you to take more sophisticated photographs.

We took an initial look at stills slide shows in Chapter Three, but this time we will combine them with audio. Audio slide shows can be very effective, and are a creative use of multimedia skills, combining the power of high-quality stills photography with the impact of an audio package.

10B1

## Getting the most out of digital cameras

Individual digital SLR cameras differ in the functions they have and how you access them, but the following is a good general guide to the features such a camera is likely to have. You'll need to browse the manual to find out how to access these features with your particular camera.

You can just point and shoot, but most cameras give you two options. One is a fully manual mode, which we'll discuss later. The other is a range of automatic options – selected by moving a dial or selecting from a menu.

### *Automatic options*

They might be for taking portraits, landscapes, sports and moving subjects, close-ups and night photography.

#### *Portrait*

This setting will bring out the portrait subject in focus against a background that has been softened (photographer-speak for not in sharp focus). This gives a photograph a sense of depth.

#### *Landscape*

The camera will select the focus area containing the subject that is closest to the camera.

#### *Sports*

You get a fast shutter speed to ensure that an image is clear and focused. The camera will automatically focus continuously on the subject that is in the centre of the lens, which means it is easy to take a sequence of stills of an event.

### *Close-ups*

This setting is useful for small objects that you want to show in detail.

### *Night photography*

The camera compensates for the low light levels and balances the main subject and background in portraits. Because light is lower, shutter speed is slower to enable the camera to gather the light it needs to illuminate the subject. If you don't hold the camera steady while the shutter is open, that can mean a blurry picture, so a tripod is useful.

### *Choosing a shooting mode*

You can also choose a shooting mode. The camera will either take one photo when the shutter button is pressed down or shoot continuously while the button is depressed. This is very useful when photographing sport and other moving objects when you'd like to capture a sequence of shots of the action.

### *Self timer or remote control*

This enables you to get into the photo you take. It can be handy if you are out on a job and want to show yourself in the action without relying on someone else to take a decent picture for you. You can put the camera on a tripod, frame the shot you want, either set the shutter-release delay (which typically gives you up to 10 seconds) or take the remote control, and get into the picture.

### *Image quality and size*

If you are shooting for print you will want a large, high-quality image. If your work is to go straight to the web, you can shoot in reduced quality. Some cameras allow you to shoot in both formats concurrently, which means you have a high-quality image for print and a low-quality one for the web.

## *Manual mode*

To get the most out of an SLR camera you need to take it out of automatic mode, where the camera decides how the picture will be taken. Now you are in full control. Here's what it enables you to do.

**on the website**

- **Find links to a wide range of video tutorials on all aspects of handling a camera in manual mode.**

### *Manual focus*

This means you choose what you focus on, rather than the camera selecting the most prominent object. It can be useful when there is more than one object in view and you want to choose to focus on one rather than the other. Maybe you have a face close to the camera but you want to blur that and go sharp on a figure behind the first one.

### *Flash mode*

In automatic mode the camera uses the flash when it needs more light. If you want to override that – so you shoot in what can be referred to as either ambient, available or natural light – you can turn the flash off.

Turning off the flash when light levels are low means the camera will need to extend the time the shutter is open. So, again, putting the camera on a tripod can be useful.

### *The two key controls*

When you are in full manual mode you have control over the two key variables that determine how your photograph is taken. These are shutter speed and aperture, measured as F stops.

#### Shutter speed

Shutter speed can vary from the very fast, 1,000th of a second, to one, two or more seconds. This is the time the shutter is open and hence how long light is admitted and can reach the sensor on which your image is recorded. A standard photograph is taken at 250th of a second.

So, the less light is available the slower the shutter speed you need; the more light, the faster the shutter speed.

#### Aperture

Aperture is the other variable. A lens has a diaphragm, a rotating section that, when turned, adjusts the amount of light coming into the lens and hence how much light hits the sensor. It will have a readout beginning with F. The higher the number, the less light comes through – so F11 lets in less light than F5.6.

### *Depth of field*

A manual aperture setting controls not only the amount of light coming in, but also the depth of field, that is, how much of a scene – containing things in the foreground, the mid-ground and background – is in focus. In manual mode you can adjust the aperture from F3.5 to F22.

All F stops allow a different amount of light in and give a different depth of field. It's like the eye of the camera, and adjusting the aperture determines how open the eye is and hence how much light is getting into it and reaching the sensor that records your image. The wider the aperture, the more light is coming in and the shallower the depth of field.

So when taking a photograph in manual mode you need to take account of how much light is available, and what depth of field you want in your photograph.

When light is low you will need to open the aperture up to allow more into the camera. But you also need to be aware of the shutter speed you are using, because if you are photographing action it could become blurred. When light is good you have plenty of options; when it is low your options are reduced.

Too much light leaves you with an overexposed photograph in which the colours are bleached. With too little light you get a dark, grainy image. So if you are shooting action in low light you need a fast shutter speed, and you need to open up your aperture to get the light you need.

### *Shutter and aperture balance*

Balancing shutter speed and aperture is the key to getting good photographs. Here are the things you must balance to get a good photograph:

- The amount of light
- The depth of field you want
- The subject
- What the subject is doing.

Taken together they will give you the balance you need between aperture and shutter speed.

You need to look at the situation. If there is a lot of movement, you will need a fast shutter speed. If there is low light, you'll need to open up your aperture to compensate.

If you want a wide depth of field you need high F ratings – F20–F22. That setting means that things in the foreground, mid-ground and background are all in focus. To have a subject in the mid-ground in focus but foreground and background out of focus use F2–F4. Medium settings – around F11 – will allow you to see either foreground and mid-ground in focus, or mid-ground and background.

*Aperture priority and shutter priority*

It all sounds very complicated, but there is a halfway house that can help you master all this. You can choose either aperture priority or shutter priority. This enables you to give priority to one and have control over it, while the other is handled automatically by the camera.

You might use shutter priority when you are shooting action but want to slow the shutter speed and make the image a little blurry, to denote movement.

Aperture priority would enable you to set the depth of field, and shutter speed would be adjusted to work with that setting.

## *Camera lenses*

*Standard lens 50 mm*

Most cameras come with a lens that has a range from say 18–55 mm, or perhaps 18–77 mm. At 50 mm the lens replicates the way the human eye works; it is close to the view we get without a camera.

*Telephoto and wide-angle lenses*

Go above 50 mm and you are zooming in on a subject, narrowing the view. Long lenses are called telephoto lenses. As you go progressively below 50 mm you are widening the angle of the image you capture. At 18 mm you have a pretty wide angle and can be close to a subject but still get it all in. There are so-called fish-eye lenses that go down to 8 mm but they distort the image in doing so.

You will be able to use 50 mm most of the time.

Wide-angle lenses are good for tight spaces such as when you need to show as much as you can of a small room, but are also good for panoramic shots of a landscape or getting the whole of a building in, or perhaps a street or other scene where you want the subject (a person) but also plenty of the situation they are in (the background).

10B2

## Slide shows with an audio commentary

The audio slide show is one of the storytelling forms to have been born out of multimedia journalism. It is a great, hybrid way of telling stories. It combines some of the audio techniques we used in Chapter Four when we created sound packages containing people's voices and actuality – atmospheric sounds that told the listener where they were or what they were

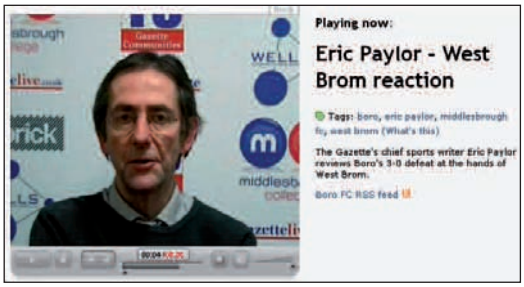
doing. It also takes in the slide show storytelling technique, but brings to it the discipline of video storytelling, as discussed in Chapter Six, where the images must combine to tell a story: a story with a beginning, middle and end.

## *Types of audio slide shows*

That said, there are a number of different types of audio slide show. The simplest adds stills to illustrate what is being said. This is not particularly adventurous, but it can be a good deal more interesting than a video of a talking head.

Here's an example of a video which is mainly a sports writer talking to camera. You'll also find a link to this video on the website:

**http://www.gazettelive.co.uk/videos-pictures/boro-fc-photos-video/2009/01/19/eric-paylor-west-brom-reaction-84229-22728439/**

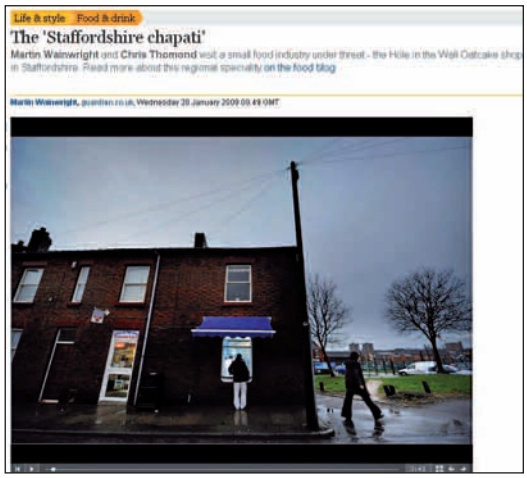

Playing now:
Eric Paylor - West Brom reaction
Tags: boro, eric paylor, middlesbrough fc, west brom (What's this)
The Gazette's chief sports writer Eric Paylor reviews Boro's 3-0 defeat at the hands of West Brom.
Boro FC RSS feed

He clearly knows his stuff, but it's hard going just looking at him for around nine minutes. We'd be better served looking at a range of powerful stills that illustrate the points he is making. We really don't need to see him much – if at all.

Here's an example of how that can be done. It's from *Press Gazette*, the B2B journalists' magazine, and appeared in the blog of the editor, Dominic Ponsford. It's about the *Daily Telegraph*'s multimedia news hub and combines a journalist's commentary with stills that illustrate what he is saying:

**http://blogs.pressgazette.co.uk/editor/2007/04/03/multimedia-inside-the-new-telegraph-newsroom/**

There are two general styles of audio slide shows developing. One is fairly newsy, with a narrator, sound bites and natural sound. Here's an example from the *Guardian*:


Life & style Food & drink
The 'Staffordshire chapati'
Martin Wainwright and Chris Thomond visit a small food industry under threat - the Hole in the Wall Oatcake shop in Staffordshire. Read more about this regional specialty on the food blog

Copyright: the *Guardian*.

**http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/audioslideshow/2009/jan/28/staffordshire-oatcake-pancake**

The other is more leisurely. It is featurey, and focuses on telling a story by combining the voices of the subjects and sounds that denote where they are or what they are doing, plus stills that illustrate what is happening to them. The *Croydon Advertiser* has pioneered this style of storytelling. Here's an example:

Copyright: *Croydon Advertiser*.

**http://www.sitbonzo.com/vinyl/**

This is a deceptively simple package – just a couple who run a record store that is closing explaining why they are having to shut – with pictures of them in the shop, plus a bit of music. But it is very atmospheric and effective. They chat in a very natural way. The stills capture aspects of the shop which video might make look rather tatty.

In both styles, we're getting close to full-blown video, but stopping short. Why would we want to do that? Well, let's think back to what we said about stills earlier. Their power is that they capture the moment. That's particularly good with sport. Stills enable the photographer to focus on details that the eye might not take in on video.

Here's an example from the BBC's coverage of the Chelsea Flower Show. It mixes interviews with winning garden designers with stills of those winning gardens. There is also low-level wild track on the audio of visitors to the show. Each speaker introduces themselves and tells us a little of what they were aiming for. The images are first class.

**http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7410878.stm**

10B3

## Gathering material for an audio slide show

You want your audio and your pictures.

Your audio will need to be of high quality, and gathered as described in Chapter Four. Indeed, it's probably worth thinking of the audio as driving the story, with the stills there to illustrate that audio. With the stills, think as you did in Chapter Five, where you wanted to tell a story with moving images, and needed an establishing shot, a series of shots of individuals and things/places in the story, many in medium close-up, plus some detail shots.

Let's take another *Croydon Advertiser* audio slide show and analyse the story as it is told in stills and sound:

Copyright: *Croydon Advertiser*.

**http://www.sitbonzo.com/scout/**

This is the story of a Scout gathering. The package starts with a caption, then a still of a sign made for the event. On the audio is a general hubbub of young voices. Then comes an aerial shot of the event, followed by a still of a Scout being helped by an adult. The audio is the same general chatter.

There follow stills of particular events, such as the Scouts on parade, with audio of a troop leader taking them through the Scout promise. Then comes an interview with a veteran, now honorary Scout member. A caption tells us who he is and we hear him talking about his time in the organisation. As he talks we get a series of stills that illustrate events at the gathering. When we see a picture of bacon frying we get an appropriate sound effect mixed into the audio. Other interviews follow, with a wide range of stills of Scouts, badges, books and other memorabilia.

The package is relaxed, it doesn't have a strong narrative thread to it, but it does capture the atmosphere, and you have a strong sense of the people featured telling their own story in their own way.

Let's also analyse another BBC archive package before we look at some general guidelines for gathering audio and stills. This one is about Jewish immigrants in the United States, and their language:

**http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/7739968.stm**

It starts with Zalmen Mlotek, artistic director of the city's last surviving professional Yiddish theatre, talking about how Yiddish song informs Jewish life. He plays piano and sings, and when the song is about a tailor, for example, we get archive stills of tailors at work and with their customers. But not all the stills relate directly to what is being said. As the tailor's song continues we get shots of provision stores and shoppers. But then, when the person speaking talks about an African-American performer who was inspired by the music, we get stills of that person, Cab Calloway – so sound and image have been pulled back together again. And as Calloway's version of the song is now sung, we get stills of general life in the tenements of the Jewish quarter of New York, followed by more stills of tailors at work. So, once again, audio and stills have come together.

The package is actually drawn from an interview that was broadcast on BBC Radio 3, but only towards the end of it do we hear the voice of the interviewer, Dennis Marks.

The package moves on to talk about Gershwin and a song his mother sang about children. The stills are of Gershwin, and then of children. Again, the package is loosely put together, but it does have a coherent thread running through it.

### *What you need*

Remember, you must tell a story. The images you use, plus the audio, must fit neatly together into a coherent story. So here's what you need:

*Audio*

- An interview with your subjects that has them speaking as naturally as possible
- You can choose whether to set the piece up with your own voice or leave it to the subjects
- Actuality or wild track – if the subject lends itself to sound effects, get people talking while they work; if not, gather wild track to lay under the other audio.

*Stills*

- An establishing shot of the place or event that the story is about
- Good shots of the subjects, preferably taken while they go about their business – having them grinning straight at camera is not ideal
- Illustrative shots of the things they talk about
- Detail shots to bring as much interest and variety to the visual side of the report as possible.

Rather than just throwing together a bunch of interesting photos, select photos that will, when placed in a certain order, tell a cohesive story – creating a type of photo essay. When done right, this is one of the more effective ways of using the web to tell stories.

It is at the editing stage that you sort out your running order and how stills and audio fit together, so let's move on to that.

10B4

## Editing an audio slide show

Before we look at some of the software you might use, let's cover some general principles on putting the elements you have together.

You might start with a title or with an establishing shot. You will need to let that opening image sink in - give the viewer time to read the title or run their eye over the establishing still, absorbing the information it contains. You must give them enough time - not too little or they can't keep up with the story, nor too long or they get bored.

This is called pacing, and applies to each image you present. A simple image might need only a second or two to be absorbed, but a more complex one - one with a good deal of detail - must be presented for longer.

However, you can gently move things forward by beginning the audio of, say, the first person to speak in your package under the opening still. That way, the reader knows what is coming next. They'll expect to see the person speaking next or, perhaps, an image that relates clearly to what he or she is speaking about.

Whether you go to a picture of the person speaking as your second still depends on how important they are to your story. With the owners of the record store that made sense. If the person speaking is not that central to the story – is describing events they were not directly part of – as in an archive package, then their picture can wait. Indeed, it might not be needed at all.

Putting audio and stills together is probably the trickiest part. You will have some clear connections between the two – points at which what is being said can be directly illustrated with stills, but the link is not as close as it is with a video package.

Review all the stills, listen to all the audio and then begin to piece them together.

Getting the start of audio and the right opening still is a good first step. As with video, you can import your images and work out a rough order for them.

Next, work out the logic of the audio so that the story is told coherently. There will be points along the way when you should bring both together directly, as with the BBC Yiddish package. At other points you can vary the images to bring variety and counterpoint to the audio. The images become, in a way, asides or additions to the main thrust of the story.

You should also go for a variety of images – general shots, medium close-ups and detail shots should be interwoven to keep the visuals varied and interesting.

You can apply transitions between images as you did with video, but don't overdo them. A clean cut from image to image usually works perfectly well.

Your software will also allow you to zoom in or out of an image, or to pan across it. If you have gathered enough material you won't need to do this, but material might be limited – perhaps you are using archive material and have only a school photograph in which the subject of your package is just a tiny face. If so, zooming in on that face, or out from it, can help prevent your visuals becoming dull.

You need to keep your audio track interesting too. It is just as important as with video to have high-quality audio. Layering your subjects' talking with wild track and appropriate music adds another depth of interest to the package.

## *Editing software*

Windows Movie Maker and Apple iMovies can both be used to create an audio and stills package. So can a range of other software.

**on the website**

- Find links to presentations on creating an audio slide show in Windows Movie Maker and Apple iMovies, and on a range of other software.

*Soundslides*

Soundslides isn't free, but it is cheap – at around £30 for the basic software – and very good. The *Croydon Advertiser* used it for the packages that we have looked at.

10B5

## Exercises and projects

### Exercise 1

Practise with an SLR camera. Take pictures in a wide variety of situations in automatic and manual mode. Once you have a shot of a subject in automatic mode, move to manual and experiment with different settings to explore creating movement in an action photograph, with depth of field to add interest to a shot, and with the use of available light rather than flash.

### Exercise 2

Look at a range of audio slide shows from a number of sources – including the sites of local and national newspapers, magazine and broadcasters' sites. Analyse the style of audio slide shows they produce. How good are they? Can they be improved? When you find a style that you like, apply it to the projects below.

### Projects

Do the following for each of the websites you are maintaining:

1 Create an audio slide show that features a commentator – such as a sports reporter – discussing a game or event. Illustrate it with appropriate stills.

2 Pick a news topic that lends itself to good stills, such as a weather story. Create an audio slide show in which you narrate the piece and conduct a number of interviews. Take appropriate stills to illustrate the interviews.

3 Create a soft-news or features audio slide show in which you record and photograph one or more individuals. Make theirs the only voices heard.

4 Find an archive subject for which there are good stills, and find relevant people to interview. Create an audio slide show using just archive pictures and the voices of interviewees.

Publish these packages to your sites and/or blog.

## on the website

- Discuss your projects with the author and industry experts.

chapter eleven

# *Video*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

- How to film and edit better videos
- Getting the most out of video cameras
- Improving your filming, story construction and editing
- Aiming for broadcast-quality video
- Shooting rough-and-ready video that puts the reporter and viewer at the heart of the action.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- Links to video photography tutorials
- Links to guides on buying and using camcorders.

11B1

# Getting the most out of video cameras

Having your video camera in automatic mode is a quick and easy solution for beginners. But for more professional filming you need to know how to use manual mode. And, as with stills cameras, there is a halfway house on most camcorders, so you can set them to adjust to, and then act automatically in, a range of different conditions such as when filming sports, landscapes, in snow, at night or where your subject is in a spotlight. Then there are fully automatic settings.

## *Manual focus*

Focusing manually on your subject means that if someone or something passes in front of the camera the focus will remain on your chosen subject. In automatic mode, the focus will momentarily change to this new, prominent object as it goes past.

Manual focus can also be useful if there are a lot of things going on in your shot. If you have control of the focus you can adjust it to take account of any movements your chosen subject makes. So, if you are following a person in a crowd, you can keep them in focus as they move, and the camera cannot be distracted by anyone else who is in the frame.

To make things easy with a static subject, put the camera in auto mode and, once it has focused on your subject, turn to manual. Then the correct focus will remain, whatever happens.

## *Manual exposure*

Manual exposure allows you to control the amount of light coming into the camera. You can turn it up or down and, now you are in control, if some extra light comes into the scene, the camera will not adjust to it. So a sudden flash of light, or if you follow a subject as they move from shadow across a brightly lit window and back into shadow, will not affect the exposure.

You can also compensate for a scene in which your subject is being back-lit by a light source behind them, such as a brightly lit window. In automatic mode the camera would take its light reading from the bright area it finds, and set its exposure to that, which means your subject gets plunged into darkness. By manually adjusting the exposure you can get the camera to brighten the whole scene, so that your subject is no longer in the shadows.

on the website

- Find links to a wide range of video tutorials on all aspects of using a video camera.

11B2

## Improve your filming, story construction and editing

By now you will have had a fair bit of practice in shooting and editing video. So what's the next step? It's to become more professional, and to refine our video storytelling. But there is a strong divergence of opinion in the industry as to how multimedia journalists should go about that.

One school of thought is that online video should aspire to the high production values seen in traditional television news packages. The other school believes that online video should be rough and ready and that good reports are not slickly produced, but instead show the reporter caught up in the thick of the action. This makes them much more immediate and compelling, the argument goes.

This is not a problem. We can cover both approaches here, so that you are equipped to make videos in either style. For what it's worth, my view is that there will be situations for most multimedia journalists where they want to use one approach, and other situations where the second is more appropriate.

So let's now review how you go about this, and make sure you are making the most of the opportunities for video that any given story offers.

11B3

## Aspiring to broadcast quality

on the website

- Find links to BBC video tutorials on all aspects of broadcast-quality video:

  **http://www.bbctraining.com**

## *Planning before the shoot*

So far we have dealt with straightforward situations that involved little planning – you just turned up with your camera and were away. But let's think now of situations in which you can prepare a bit more. So what do you do in advance?

Whenever possible, it makes sense to find out as much as you can about a story before you set out to shoot your video. Having a clear idea of what the story is will enable you to make a list of the interviews you will need to conduct, the locations you will want to feature and the main shots you will need. To tell a story effectively through moving pictures you obviously have to have those pictures. Planning helps ensure you don't miss any essentials out. So, here's a checklist:

- What's the story?
- What angle will you take?
- What pictures will you need to tell it?
- Who will you need to interview?
- What locations will bring the story alive?

Here's an example. You have a press release about increased truancy levels in local schools. This comes against the background of an average of two parents a week being jailed because their children were persistent truants.

Bear in mind the Press Complaints Commission's Code of Practice as you consider how to cover this story.

**on the website**

- **Find a link to the Code of Practice; here is the clause that you must abide by with this story:**

> **6 Children**
>
> i) Young people should be free to complete their time at school without unnecessary intrusion.
>
> ii) A child under 16 must not be interviewed or photographed on issues involving their own or another child's welfare unless a custodial parent or similarly responsible adult consents.

iii) Pupils must not be approached or photographed at school without the permission of the school authorities.

iv) Minors must not be paid for material involving children's welfare, nor parents or guardians for material about their children or wards, unless it is clearly in the child's interest.

## questions

Think about how you might approach this story, and go through the list above. Don't read on until you have thought about it.

Here's our suggestion. We need to personalise the story, and focus on individuals who reflect its complexities.

- **What's the story?** Truancy levels are up. Parents elsewhere have been jailed. Why's this happening and is jailing parents the solution?
- **What angle will you take?** Find a parent whose child is a persistent truant. Interview the parent and, with their permission, the child.
- **What pictures will you need to tell it?** School, parent, child and home; children at school, truanting children.
- **Who will you need to interview?** Child, parent, school head, education authority official, perhaps another expert.
- **What locations will bring the story alive?** The school, the places the child and others hang out when they should be at school, the child's home.

You need to set up the interviews you need. Ideally get all interviewees in one of these locations to avoid talking-head-in-office footage. Find out from the child where they hang out when they should be at school. Can they introduce you to other truants (remember to abide by the code)?

### *Setting things up*

Write a summary for yourself of the story and how you want to tell it, with interviewees and locations. Work out a shooting schedule that is achievable in the time available. What are the

main interviews, locations and points you want to make? Some reporters like to rough out a storyboard so they can see what elements they need in the story, their order and ensure the transition between each is smooth and logical.

For example, with this story the cue for the newsreader if this is part of an online news bulletin, or in print if the story is to be embedded in a news site, can be an extension of the story summary we worked on above: truancy levels are up. Parents elsewhere have been jailed. Why's this happening and is jailing parents the solution?



### *First scene*

Show the school, kids streaming in, with you in the midst of them doing a piece to camera, talking about the school you are in, how many pupils it has and a line such as "Or at least, there should be 640 pupils in there today, but some are missing. And, on average, *xx* of them will not be ill or have another good reason for their absence; they are playing truant."

### *Second scene*

At "they are playing truant", cut to footage of truanting kids. Maybe a quick general shot of a bunch of them, perhaps hanging around in a kids' playground, then cutting to the truant you are going to interview. Over this picture you can give his or her name and, perhaps over footage of them messing around, give their details.

Move to you interviewing them in the same location. Ask them why they truant. Don't they worry their parent might be jailed?

### *Third scene*

At home with the parent. Demonstrate their home life. Perhaps this is a single parent who has to go out to work and can't be sure that their child has gone to school. The interview with them can be intercut with them and child at home – pictures that give a flavour of what life is like in that house. If the parent says the child spends all day playing computer games in their bedroom, show them doing that.

The key question of the parent is: you could be jailed. Will that help you and your child?

### *Fourth scene*

Talking to the head and/or education official about this situation and the situation generally. Avoid having them in an office if possible. Ideally get them together at the school, perhaps in the playground with children in the background.

### *Fifth scene*

The expert who disapproves of jailings. Have them in the park with the truants on their bikes in the background.

## *Putting the plan into action*

Your research and initial interview with your interviewees should equip you well. You will be reasonably sure what they will say, and know the locations and footage you need to tell the story visually.

### *When you are filming*

Up to now we have kept our shooting very simple. The next stage is to add more variety to it, and to follow some of the rules used by broadcasters such as the BBC.

We talked earlier about three basic shots. Now we'll add two more, to add variety and interest to the videos we make. These are the five shots you can use:

- Wide shot – the subject is small in the frame
- Long shot – the subject is shown head to toe in the frame but a good deal of their surroundings is still in shot
- Medium shot – the subject is filmed from the waist up
- Medium close-up – that's the one from chest upwards that we've used before
- Close-up – head and shoulders
- Big close-up – from forehead to chin, with the top of the head out of shot.

You can also use one of three camera angles:

- High angle – a bird's-eye view looking down on the subject
- Low angle – at foot level, often used to show a lot of anonymous feet when you can't identify those in the picture
- Eye level – the most common shot, with the camera set pretty much at the subject's eye level.

### *Follow the five-shot rule*

You could just use one shot per scene. So, if someone is talking, you film their face in close-up. Or, if they are doing something such as washing up, you film them in medium shot.

We want more variety, and to shoot a range of shots that will cut together into an interesting logical sequence. There are five shots that we should film for each important scene that we

want to capture, and using them is called following the five-shot rule. These are generally the shots to take, in this sequence, when we want to record someone performing a task:

- Close-up of the hands
- Close-up of the face
- Wide shot of them and what they are doing
- Over the shoulder shot, from behind them, of what they are doing
- Another shot from a different angle – you might film them from the side, or from a high or low angle.

If you shoot in this sequence the shots will edit together easily.

Remember, we are looking for pictures that tell the story. As we are telling the story visually just as much as verbally, we will only marry an image of a person speaking with what they are saying at certain points in our film. At other times, we cut away from their face as they speak to other shots, but what they say – the audio track – runs on beneath the various pictures.

One simplification of this filming approach is to shoot like this:

- The person
- The thing
- The person with the thing.

You can also shoot some material that can be used as cutaways – to a general scene of some kind – and cut-ins to some detail. These can be used to mask edits when you have two sections in which a person is talking to camera but you need to edit them together. If you have a cutaway or a cut-in you can insert a second or two of this, so that while the picture transition is masked, the audio of the person speaking runs seamlessly together.

**on the website**

- **Find a wide range of links to video tutorials and other guidance on filming and editing.**

11B4

# Aspiring to immediacy

We know that video published on the web has some things in common with traditional TV packages. Some publishers aspire to the high production values of traditional terrestrial TV, and the guidance above will move you in that direction. But by no means all do. As video on the web develops, it is establishing a second style all of its own. This style of video journalism is about capturing the moment, about the reporter being in the thick of things and putting the viewer at the centre of the action.

It's fair to say no one really knows which form will become the norm – my hunch is both will become well established.

## *Capturing the moment*

When video journalism is about capturing the moment, it follows that the quality of the video is less important than what it captures. It might be about getting a picture that no one else has, or of hugely dramatic events seen from on the ground. No one complains if video, for example, of the survivors of the London tube bombings being led from the blasted carriages is grainy and jerky.

**on the website**

- **Find a video in which CNN anchor John Roberts expands on the importance of capturing the moment.**

Roberts gives an example of how this technique need not always be applied in dramatic circumstances. In the US, fears of terrorist attacks on aircraft have led to the introduction of a no fly list. The list contains the names of people who are flagged up as a potential security risk to airlines. CNN reporter Drew Griffin is on it himself. So how does he tell the story? By going to airports and putting himself at the heart of the story. He shows the queues of people similarly blacklisted and the hoops they have to jump through before they can

get on to a plane. Roberts says this is: "The correspondent walking you through the story in a way that helps you understand. It adds an element to video journalism that you can't get with any other form of journalism."

## *What the* Wall Street Journal *is doing*

The *Wall Street Journal* sees video as another way for the audience to experience what the reporter is experiencing. As deputy managing editor Alan Murray explains in a video you'll find on the website and here

**http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=E89I2K-6nQk**

the newspaper has a lot of reporters who do a lot of things and go to a lot of places that most people can't go to. So, many of those reporters have been given video cameras, including phone cameras, to enable them to capture footage of those things and places.

Murray says: "So the camera becomes another way for them to tell their stories, another way for users to experience what they are experiencing."

So this is distinct from pursuing high video production standards and going for well-produced packages. The *Wall Street Journal* is trying to integrate video with its reporting, a much more rough-and-ready approach.

## *Putting the viewer at the centre of the action*

Mark Davis is an interesting example of the solo video journalist. And the way he – and video journalists in general – shoot is considered by many to have an advantage over finely crafted traditional TV packages. See the profile in *The Age*:

**http://www.theage.com.au/news/entertainment/tv–radio/outrunning-death-in-race-for-the-future-of-news/2009/02/14/1234028346938.html**

You'll find a link to the profile on the website. In it the writer makes this point:

> **Some news broadcasters believe the public wants more of this style of journalism. Many media companies, especially those with current affairs programmes and online news outlets, say it is the future of journalism and are training increasing numbers of reporters in how to become video journalists – that is, reporters, camera operators, film editors, producers.**
>
> **That the footage appears raw and the storylines unplanned can give television audiences a feeling of being at the centre of the action.**

Michael Rosenblum is a former TV journalist who got fed up with the instant, short, superficial packages he had to produce for the small screen. He decided he wanted to cover a story as a print journalist would – in depth – but using video. So he went to Gaza and lived for a month with a Palestinian family during the first intifada. He filmed every day and, when he returned, had this very different, very personal style of video accepted by various networks.

**on the website**

- **Find a link to a video that takes the story on from there, and develops into an explanation of how video journalism has developed and Rosenblum's view of how essential it is for any news website. His view is that any news website simply has to have video, or it will lose out to its rivals.**

## *Citizen journalism and video reporting*

There is a clear citizen journalism element in online video too. YouTube partnered with the Pulitzer Center to run a competition for the best video journalism from a non-professional journalist. The $10,000 prize went to Arturo Perez Jr, who made a video about a Californian community for disabled adults. But along with the interviews he conducted and the footage he recorded, he also gave a number of residents cameras, and what they filmed is a vital part of his finished film.

## on the website

- You can see his video.

### *Don't imitate TV*

Jeff Jarvis, journalism professor at the City University of New York and editor of BuzzMachine, believes that, online, media companies should not try to imitate traditional television formats in their video, but instead need to reinvent it for this medium.

**on the website**

- In the video you'll find on the website, Jarvis is asked if any media organisation has learned how to do video effectively online, and he replies, in part:

> They are making a big mistake in still trying to imitate old TV. They're doing all this stuff just because TV did it, and there is no reason to.
>
> Some people online don't want to call themselves television. I say that they should but they should see it as the next generation of TV.
>
> [Video journalists] can tell great stories without the clichés of TV. That I think will spread where we'll see people trying to reinvent what TV can be.

11B5

## Examples of broadcast-quality video on the web

All that said, there are plenty of people who believe that video standards online will continue to rise and will get to TV quality. This is the goal of plenty of media companies, and it's not that hard to do. You're already a good deal of the way there.

The *New York Times* is shooting with high-definition cameras at broadcast quality and displaying its video in a player that is much larger than the typical YouTube-size box. Here's an example:

### *Rescue on the Hudson*

**http://video.nytimes.com/video/2009/01/15/nyregion/1231545383659/rescue-on-the-hudson.html**

This video of a plane brought down on the Hudson River in New York by the pilot after a bird strike put its engines out of action includes narration from the reporter, a mix of interviews and shots of the scene, stills of the rescue and a graphic showing the plane's route from La Guardia to the river. It packs a lot into its two minutes and 16 seconds.

The New York Times
Video
The New York Times
N.Y./REGION
Miracle on the Hudson:
US Airways Plane Ditches in River
By KEN BELSON & SHAYLA HARRIS
January 15, 2009
Rescue on the Hudson
All passengers and crew members aboard US Airways Flight 1549 were safely evacuated after the pilots made an emergency landing in the Hudson River.

We can't know which way things will go. My hunch is that both forms will exist side by side, to be used as conditions – and publishers – demand.

Let's look at some examples of broadcast-quality video that would sit just as easily on the web as it would on TV. These examples are taken from a site called b-roll.net, a television photography resource where professional photographers, videographers, cameramen, editors and photojournalists discuss the industry:

**http://b-roll.net/today/**

## questions

Look at these videos. You'll find them on the website.

Watch each video before you read our comments about it. Consider how the story is told in each case. Analyse the way the videos are put together. Look at the shots they use.

## *1 Weleetka fire*

This is the story of a fire which destroyed several shops in the heart of a small town. But the report does not begin in a straightforwardly newsy way, with the details of the fire and the damage done. Instead, towards the end of a quick succession of mixed shots – general views, detail shots and others – we hear a woman say "It just makes me heartsick," followed by the reporter giving her name and saying "Netty Asbury just had to see for herself."

In the next sequence, shots of the woman speaking are mixed with more of the damage, and her voice is intercut with the reporter giving explanatory background to what the woman tells us about the impact on her, the townspeople and in particular a famous restaurant that is now destroyed.

This approach emphasises the human impact of the fire. Only after it do we get the reporter, in a piece to camera, telling us of the full extent of the physical damage. Then we hear from a fire officer, with a continued mix of shots of the aftermath of the fire and the demolition necessitated.

The report ends with another resident speaking. She finishes on: "This little town was our whole life," over a general view of the setting sun through the smoke and dust. The shot is

held for several seconds after she has finished speaking, giving a poignant ending to the report.

## 2 Flood

Here's an example of a reporter putting himself very much into the story. Floods in the English town of Shrewsbury have devastated the town centre. After some establishing shots of a boat being rowed up the main street, and footage of flooded businesses, the reporter gets into almost every scene, standing up to his waist in the flooded street, wading into a flooded pub, back in the street with the water now at chest height – which shows that high production values and getting right to the heart of a story are not mutually exclusive.

At one point we have a medium shot of the reporter asking a question, and then the camera zooms out to a long shot that includes a man looking out of the first-floor window above the shop.

Notice how, in a number of scenes, the reporter has clearly done some research in advance. When he walks into the pub he knows who he is going to talk to and has obviously run through the answers he is going to get to his questions in advance. That's evidence of good planning – either before setting out or once on the scene, and before shooting anything. An initial chat will enable you to identify the story – or the segment of your overall story that this sequence will form within the whole – and enable you to conduct a crisp, swiftly paced interview.

## 3 Adrenalin on wings

With this video, look at how fast the story of a parachute jump is told, right at the start. It takes just a few seconds to go from an establishing shot of planes on the ground through the take-off, jump, descent and whoops of joy as the parachutists land safely. That's a great, fast sequence which constitutes a mini-story within the story.

From there, notice how the story is told with a complex sequence of fast clips in which a range of individuals' quotes are used to paint the picture of an airfield that is being forced to close down.

The story could be told more simply with fewer shots and a voice-over from the reporter, but this technique makes the video much more interesting.

### 4 Lunar eclipse

This report, pegged to a lunar eclipse, is essentially made up of some nice nighttime footage of the moon, plus interviews with two scientists. That could be pretty dull to watch, but the journalist has made it interesting by skilfully intercutting the moon footage with short snaps from the two interviews. There is no piece to camera or journalist's voice-over. The whole story is told through the quotes from the two scientists, and these are intercut as if a baton is being passed repeatedly from one to the other.

By using a good combination of images that coincide with the scientists' explanations, aspects of the story such as why the moon takes on certain colours are illustrated pictorially.

There is history here too: Columbus conning the native Americans by saying he would take away the moon when he knew – but they didn't – that an eclipse was coming.

So what do we take from these examples?

It's really that there are many ways to tell a story. Each story requires us to be imaginative in the way we handle it.

**on the website**

- Find links to the best of video journalism.

11B6

## Exercises and projects

### Exercise 1

Experiment with a camcorder in manual mode. Shoot the same scene in a range of ways. Practise using manual settings.

### Exercise 2

Practise shooting scenes using the full range of shots, and following the five-shot rule described above. Create edited sequences from the shots you film.

### Exercise 3

Take three or four sites on which video reports are included and look at how professional the packages are. If possible compare the same story covered on TV and in video on a website.

### Exercise 4

Look for more rough-and-ready styles of video and compare their effectiveness with more polished packages. Do you notice a difference in the circumstances and/or subjects where this technique is used?

### Projects

1 Make videos of as professional a quality as you can for your websites or blog. Use the techniques of preparation, filming and editing that are described and illustrated in this chapter.

2 Find occasions when it seems appropriate to make rough-and-ready videos in which you as reporter are in the heart of the action.

### on the website

- Send us your videos for our comments
- Look out for masterclasses in video.

chapters


12 **News stories, features and in-depth packages**

13 **Sub-editing, search engine optimisation and proofreading**

14 **Publishing platforms for advanced multimedia storytelling**

15 **Still-picture editing and telling stories through multiple still photographs**

16 **Editing and presenting audio and video news bulletins and longer magazine-style programming**

17 **The future: Web 3.0**

18 **Getting a job as a multimedia journalist**


part C

# *Professional standards*

## Aims of this section

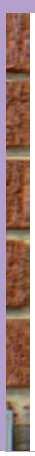
In this section we aim to bring you up to the standard expected of a newly qualified multimedia journalist as defined by the Joint Journalism Training Forum and within the media industry more generally.

If you are on a course accredited by the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ), then the aim is to take you to the standard required to pass the relevant units in the NCTJ's preliminary qualification – you have to work for 18 months or so on a publication before you can take their National Certificate Examination (NCE) and be fully qualified in their terms.

So, we will cover some familiar things in greater depth, and at an advanced level, but also introduce other areas of study that we have not tackled before.

In summary, we will work on bringing you up to professional standards in:

- Features writing – general features, interviews, reviews, columns and comment pieces for print and online publication
- News writing – with the focus on writing to exam formats
- Creating in-depth special areas for websites



- Advanced online research methods – getting the most out of Google and also using more specialised alternatives to it
- Sub-editing news and features for print and online
- Search engine optimisation.

We will look at hyper-local and other versions of geographically tagged journalism, including:

- How to geotag content
- Using maps as the basis of multimedia storytelling
- Creating multimedia mashups with the use of Google Maps, Apture and other free software.

We also cover advanced still-picture editing using software, including Picnik and Photosynth, and identifying picture sources. Editing and presenting online news bulletins and longer magazine-style web programming will also be covered.

We finish up with a look at how the web is developing, with the advent of what is known as Web 3.0, and a look at finding a job as a multimedia journalist.

chapter twelve

# *News stories, features and in-depth packages*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

- Writing a wide range of features for print
- Writing news at the standard expected of trainee journalists employed in the media
- Creating in-depth packages for websites
- Advanced online research.

When looking at features we will work on:

- Interviewing for features
- Features structure
- Good opening sequences and endings
- General features
- Reviews
- Comment, leaders and other opinion pieces
- First-person columns.

In the section **Writing news at the standard expected of trainee journalists** we will look at text news writing in the format that the National Council for the Training of Journalists uses.

In creating in-depth packages for websites we will look at planning, structuring and populating an archive or specialist area on a website that contains a large amount of content.

The section will cover:

- Identifying a topic that has been covered regularly over a period of time, and that has a high level of public interest
- Selecting key items to add to an archive or special report on this subject
- Building the archive or special report, creating a welcome screen that sets out the subject matter and contains links, presented logically, to the individual story files.

And we'll look at how to use the web most effectively to research, which means going well beyond a straightforward Google search and includes:

- Getting the most out of Google
- Google's limitations
- Alternatives to Google
- Searching the deep or invisible web.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- Writing exercises in a mock-exam format
- A wide range of supporting material
- Masterclasses on features writing, news writing, creating web archives and special areas, and advanced research online.

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# Writing a wide range of features for print

In this section we will go deeper into features: an area of text journalism that doesn't transfer well to online, but which is a mainstay of magazine journalism and – increasingly – of newspapers, as they become 'viewspapers' that analyse and comment rather than newspapers that break news.

## *Features defined*

Way back in Chapter One we began by establishing a definition of news. We'll do the same now for features. Features differ from news stories in some ways, but they share many fundamentals with news. Here is our definition of news. It:

- Is new to our readers
- Is factual
- Is about people
- Is relevant to our readers, viewers and listeners – it affects them
- Often dramatic and out of the ordinary
- Often involves conflict
- Can be something that someone doesn't want us to report
- Is perishable
- Is a good story well told.

News also needs a peg – a reason for running the story now.

The first thing to note is that a good feature has many – often all – of the elements of a good news story. So all the above are important considerations when we write a feature. We should think of these news values as being at the core of a feature. But there are some differences, and things we can do in a feature that we can't do in a news story.

For one thing, a feature is usually longer than a news story. While a news story might average out at between 200 and 400 words, features are rarely shorter than 600 words, and many are between 800 and 1,000 words. Some, particularly in magazines, can be much longer.

Features are longer for a reason. With a feature we want to go into a subject in more depth, and to include more detail. We often want to focus on one or more individuals in a feature, and to tell their story fully. We can set the scene. If we interview someone we can write about the place in which we talk to them, about what they are wearing, how they talk and other mannerisms. Whereas a news story must be objective in its coverage of events, there is room for the author's interpretation in a feature. So a feature is more subjective than a news story.

If a news story is there to give a reader the facts – quickly and without unnecessary details – a feature is often there to tell a story through an individual's experience.

If we are writing about a famine, the news story will concentrate on the numbers of people starving, the causes, the aid effort and other key factual elements required to tell the story. If we write a *feature* about a famine we may well concentrate on the plight of a particular individual or family. We will describe their suffering; we will talk to them about what has happened to them. We hope the reader will relate to the individuals we talk to as fathers, mothers, children – as a family that has hit very hard times.

In doing so we will engage with our readers' emotions. If we have done our job well as features writers, the reader will feel the plight of these people. Often, it is not the news report about thousands of people starving to death that gets a reaction from the rest of the world; it is seeing the wide, frightened eyes of one malnourished child that goads readers or viewers into action.

Features writers – or at least good ones – develop their own style. You could say they have their own voice. When we write a news story, we have no individual voice. News has a rigid formula that requires an anonymous style. A feature allows the writer much more leeway.

Sometimes, the feature writer is the subject of his or her feature. But be very wary of putting yourself in a feature unless you have been asked for a first-person piece – a feature in which you are the main character, describing your experiences.

Features contain all the elements in our definition of news, with some important additions. Features are similar to news stories in that they:

- Are new to our readers
- Are factual
- Are about people
- Are relevant to our readers, viewers and listeners – the feature affects them
- Are often dramatic and out of the ordinary
- Often involve conflict
- Are sometimes about something that someone doesn't want us to report
- Are perishable
- Are a good story well told.

Features differ from news stories in that they also:

- Contain colourful descriptions of people and places
- Often tell personal stories in detail
- Engage with the reader's emotions as well as their intellect.

Features are also:

- More subjective than news, and can include the writer's assessments of, and comments on, the situation they are writing about.

And, finally:

- Features writers can have their own style and develop their own voice.

## *The main types of feature*

- **Find links to a range of good features, and to publications that regularly run high-quality features.**

### *General features, often inspired by news stories*

Features are often described as a "look behind the news". We take an issue that is mentioned in a news story and write about it in more detail and in more depth. Or we take a current news topic and write about one of the key people – or groups of people – that are caught up in it. Such a feature gives the reader an insight into those who are caught up in events – what they are feeling, how they are suffering or coping.

Many news stories can be used as the peg for a feature.

### *Interviews*

Some features – often involving a famous person or a powerful politician – are written as interviews. There is little else in them other than the answers to questions that have been put.

But interviewing is important to almost all features. Almost all features include quotes from people appropriate to the subject matter. There are people we want to talk to in order to bring a feature subject to life. We shall look at interviewing in more detail as we work through this section.

### *First-person features, including columns*

Here, the features writer can use "I" a good deal, because the reader has come to hear about them. It is very hard to write a really good first-person column. Many try, too many are published, few are worth reading.

*Opinion pieces and comment*

These are about the writer's views and opinions. The writer must draw on their expertise – either of an industry, if they are on a B2B publication, or of a subject (such as politics, or beauty products) if on a consumer title.

*Reviews*

Reviews are a features writer's assessment of a movie, a play or other kind of live or recorded performance, a book, a meal, a hotel or any number of other products or services.

## Why features are better suited to print than the web

This is because you really can't scan a feature. Or, if you do, you won't get much out of it. Features require reading closely, so that you engage with them. That said, there are some developments in features style and structure that help the scanner. Today there are fewer long feature reads in magazines and newspapers than in the past. Features are often broken up into boxes or other small elements. In some magazines, a feature is broken up further into bite-size chunks of a paragraph or so. Interviews become brisk Q and As.

We'll look at how to research and write the key types of feature.

## Features inspired by news stories

Another way in which features differ from news is in how they come about. News often just happens. It lands at our feet and we write about it. News is often obvious. If a senior politician is arrested, a sports star dies in a car crash, a fire destroys a factory or a company goes bust, then the news interest is obvious.

We need to use our journalistic instincts to spot what news events might make a good feature.

For instance, if a footballer is in a coma after a car crash following an all-night booze and cocaine binge, maybe the accident is symptomatic of something. Perhaps it's an example of how hugely rich young stars lack the maturity to cope with their riches. Maybe there have been other incidents of drunken brawls, gambling addiction, drug addiction that can be tied together as examples around which a feature – a look behind the news – can be built. We can seek interviews with some of the affected stars, their managers and advisers. We can talk to sports agents, sports psychologists and other experts.

It helps if we have a headline in mind to give focus to the piece. We might go with: *Too much too young*.

Our feature will include quotes, colour, description and analysis. We'll want gripping content that engages the reader. If in our research we find that the wife of the young footballer whose

car crash put him into a coma is prepared to talk to us and allow us to photograph her at his bedside, we may have either a very powerful opening sequence to the feature or, if the star is a big enough name, a powerful stand-alone interview.

### *Examples of features inspired by news stories*

In *Times2*, the features section of *The Times*, a feature headlined "Student behaviour that goes beyond a joke" has a subsidiary headline – known as a standfirst – that identifies the news stories that inspired it:

> **A "bring a fit Jew" party and a Ku Klux Klan editorial in the student paper have rocked Oxford University but should we be worried? *Tom Whipple* dons a false beard and fake breasts to find out.**

Here's another. Under the headline "A mocking parody of my difference" is the standfirst: "Carol Thatcher's use of the word golliwog has brought an almost forgotten term back into the public consciousness. *Lola Shoneyin* recalls the shock of being called it as a child and tells how she has prepared her son for similar insults."

## *Interviewing for features*

We looked at interviewing in some detail in Chapter Six. Now we'll develop what we did there by concentrating on particular types of feature. And we won't worry about interviewing for audio or video. This is interviewing purely for print.

### *A "Life in the Day"*

This is a hugely popular feature that holds the inside back page of the *Sunday Times Magazine*. It's a simple idea, and an incredibly effective one. The person is interviewed about their day, and in describing it they reveal a good deal about themselves and their life.

It's worth looking closely at how this feature works, because it is more complex than you might think. To carry out an interview that gives all the information needed for it involves a lot of time and care.

#### How the feature works

I suggest you go online and read a couple of "Life in the Day" features to get a feel for them. Later I'm going to look in detail at two:

1 **David Mitchell**:

**http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/stage/comedy/article4255472.ece**

2 **Rob da Bank**:

**http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/women/the_way_we_live/article4212078.ece**

So read those, plus any others that look interesting. Don't read on until you have done this research.

### The structure

The person's day forms the structure of the story. The piece always begins with them getting up, and ends at the end of their day. This is fixed.

### The variables

There are two levels of variable:

- The superficial variables are the details of what they do – big breakfast or no breakfast, for example
- The more important variables come from the significance of each of these minor details for the individual.

## *To make it work*

Everything you say about their day must be selected for its broader significance. Nothing is inconsequential; it is all pertinent to the portrait we are building up of them as a person.

The detail of their day shines a bright light on important aspects of their lives, such as their attitude to work, money, family and whether they have one, many or no key relationships.

### The important variables

While the day is followed chronologically, the broader themes that are overlaid on the structure can be introduced in a variable order. This is dictated by what significance each point in the day actually has.

Breakfast, for example, might bring the reminder of a partner who died, and so the subject's sense of loss and loneliness might be the first broader theme explored.

But breakfast might introduce another broad theme – a dysfunctional attitude to food, for example.

## questions

Look again at the two columns mentioned above, and note the superficial and important variables in each.

Below I've listed what I consider to be the important variables in the order they are introduced in the two columns. Make a list of your own, then take a look at mine.

**1 David Mitchell**:

**http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/stage/comedy/article4255472.ece**

- **Important variables**
- Career now
- Home and responsibilities
- Health and self-image
- Attitude to food
- Career to date and significant relationship
- Social life.

The overall picture we get is of a young fogey, who is not very interested in his home surroundings or in money, who lives more or less as a student might and whose key relationship is with his comedy partner.

**2 Rob da Bank**

**http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/women/the_way_we_live/article4212078.ece**

- **Important variables**
- Childhood and fatherhood
- Attitudes to food
- Career now and significant relationship
- Attitude to work

- Family life
- Significant relationship.

The picture we get is of a man for whom family life is incredibly important. We might find this surprising, given his career. Everything he does is built around family life.



## questions

In the second column there is very little on past career. Is that a miss?

### How to interview a "Life in the Day" subject

You'll see that to get all the detail you need out of your subject will take quite some time. You'll need to ask them lots of things about their day, many of which won't find their way into the piece. Each question you ask about the detail of their lives is designed to probe for important things that you can then explore.

For instance, if they say they have a shower in the morning you can ask them what products they use. They might say they have no idea, that their partner buys that sort of stuff, or perhaps they might reveal a scrupulous beauty regime involving several expensive, exotic products. If they do, then you can ask them if it is important to pamper themselves. Did they always have expensive products? What about as a child? Perhaps they say money was tight when they were growing up and they had to make do with a lump of green carbolic. Maybe they vowed that when they could afford it they would indulge in a luxurious bathing and beauty regime. This line of questioning might open up the key to their childhood and how it affected them.

If they say they walk to work you need to ask them about the route. Why do they walk? How far is it? What do they see? There might be nothing very interesting in the walk, but it could be the key to them. If the person says they count the number of buses they see and pray that the total isn't 13, or that they avoid stepping on the gaps between paving stones, it reveals something unusual about them.

In this as in every other interview, you are trying to build up a fully rounded picture of your subject. After the interview you should be able to go over in your mind every aspect of them and their life, and have the answer to pretty much any question someone (maybe your editor) might ask you about them.

So, if they say they put on their suit, you need to know if they like wearing it, where they got it, what it cost. Do they have just one suit or many? Are they interested in clothes? What

style of clothes do they prefer to wear? If the person clearly has no interest in clothes this is not an avenue we can go very far with, but if clothes are important to them then this is an important aspect of their life, and we need to find out all we can about it.

So, how to get all this information?

Just as the day forms the framework of the feature, asking about it can form the framework of the interview. Take them through their day, building up in your mind an overall sketch of the shape their day takes. No doubt as they talk there will be some key points about the day that spark lots of subsidiary questions, or which get them talking without you prompting them much. You can let those asides run, get all you need out of them. The danger is that you forget the chronology. You forget at what exact point in the day they had got to and a jump occurs. If it does, you need to spot it and go back later to fill in the hole in your knowledge of their day.

Once they have taken you through their day once in outline, you can go back and probe each part of it, checking for the significant variables that are revealed by the insignificant ones.

Interviewing for a "Life in the Day" is a great way to learn the skills of features interviewing. The method you use will stand you in good stead whenever you need to interview for a feature.

## *How to structure a general feature*

"Life in the Day" is a good starting point because the structure is ready-made for you. But if we don't have a ready-made framework – and very often we don't – how do we structure a feature? And how do we decide what to say in the intro?

Features writing gives us much freedom. There are many ways to begin and structure a feature. Whereas news writers have the inverted triangle as a guide, features writers often lack a suitable scheme for beginning and structuring their pieces. We will look at some useful structures to use in place of the inverted triangle in a bit. But first – how do you begin?

With news you start with what's new, what has happened or will happen. With a feature you can start anywhere. Your intro isn't there to tell the reader what the latest is; it is there to hook them, to grab them and make them read on. But you must still have a focus. So the thing you choose to start with should be relevant to the theme you are going to develop through the feature.

So how do you decide, from all the information you have, what to put first? You can ask yourself the following:

- What's the most interesting thing?
- If you have done an interview – what one thing do you remember?
- If reading through your notes, what is the key point?

Just as with news, you must hook the reader. Colour, detail, description, personality, all are good ways of providing a hook.

Let's use our earlier example of our "Too much too young" feature about sporting stars who go off the rails. The interview we have with the wife of the footballer in a coma after an accident is going to be very powerful. If she allows us to see her at her husband's bedside, that might give us a strong introductory sequence. Perhaps she puts the TV on whenever his former club is playing, hoping that the sounds and atmosphere, and hearing the names of his former team mates, might provide the stimulus to break the coma.

Describing this scene will give us a compelling start. We can take some time on this scene, and leave an outline of what the feature is about until later – maybe 200 or 300 words later. As we will very likely have a standfirst to introduce our broad themes this is not a problem.

So these are the first two elements in structuring a general feature:

1 Hook the reader. Give them colour, description, quotes or whatever it takes to engage their interest and perhaps their emotions. In a standard-length feature – anything from 800 to 1,300 words – you can take 10–15 per cent of the total word count for this.

2 Give them the big picture. Say what the feature is about, how the example you have started with relates to the major theme you are exploring. That theme is summed up in the headline: "Too much too young". So we can pose that as a question and support our asking it with a mention of other examples of excess.

This is the focus for the feature. It works rather like an intro in a news story, but it comes later than it would do in a news story. It says what the feature is about and should contain a mention of the main themes and areas we are going to cover. If we do that the reader knows where the feature is going and does not find any surprises later on.

## *Getting the intro right*

There is a deal of subjectivity in deciding whether a feature intro works. With a news story we have the simple yardstick: does it say what is new? Now we must apply the much broader test: does it hook the reader? Will they read it and then read on? Because of this, it's likely that if 10 writers had the same material from which to craft a feature, they'd come up with two, three or more different ways of introing it.

Here are some examples of intros that I think work well. I'll explain why I like them. I've included links to the full feature where they are available online. You'll also find these links on the website.

1 Red petals scatter the stone steps of the Metropolitan cathedral in Timisoara, a city in western Romania. The petals have showered a bride and groom, and garlanded Dacia cars honk in jubilation. The noise is deafening.

Fifteen years ago this month, these steps were spattered with the blood of fallen protesters, gunned down while crying "Down with Ceausescu! Down with Communism! We want liberty!" The people of Timisoara, like the rest of Romania, fed up with 45 years of Communism, the rants of President Nicolae Ceausescu, fear, corruption, queues for stale black bread, and grey cement homes, had risen against the totalitarian state. The noise must have been deafening.

(Lee Karen Stow, The Times)

**http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article398145.ece**

That's a great opening sequence because it packs in a great deal of information, both historic and current, about a city, but it does so by giving you two very vivid pictures that present very different images of the place now and in the not so distant past.

2 I meet William Hague at King's Cross station at 8.15 in the morning. He is standing alone on the concourse, neat and shiny as a new pin, not just his head, the whole of him, a Times and an FT his only luggage, nothing else to spoil the cut of what he later says, when pressed, is a £2,000 Savile Row suit. He's been awake a long while, and had his porridge, as is his habit. We exchange pleasantries about Yorkshire: his hometown of Rotherham in the south, his constituency of Richmond in the north, my hometown of Hull in the east, which is where, as part of his publicity tour for his biography of William Pitt the Younger, we are bound today. Hague smiles a lot. For him, this is virtually a day off.

(Robert Campton, The Times)

This is a brilliant opener because it effortlessly packs a huge amount of information into its 135 words. But look at how much interviewing it will have taken to get all that stuff. Take the suit, for example. Like all the other details it is priceless because they build up such a detailed portrait of the man. But ask him about his suit and I bet at first he just muttered something. Is it bespoke? Is it Savile Row? How much did it cost? Hague might not have wanted to say, so the interviewer might have had to say, "Okay, was it £5,000?" "No, no, nothing like as much as that." "A thousand?" "A little more than that . . ." "Okay I'm going to write £2,000 unless you tell me that's wrong."

Getting the information about his breakfast and other details will have been very similar to working on a "Life in the Day". And the interviewer has subtly but firmly put himself in the intro.

3 **London, Paris, New York, Milan . . . and the Outer Hebrides. That's right: the Scottish islands are having what is known as a Fashion Moment.**
**(Simon Chilvers, The Guardian)**

**http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2004/nov/29/fashion**

That's a much shorter, simpler intro, but it uses the very effective device of a surprising contrast to hook the reader. It is intriguing, and almost challenges you not to read on.

4 **Later I am going to make you interested, for the first time in your life, in grout.**
**(Bryan Appleyard, The Sunday Times)**

**http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/article526744.ece**

I like this intro because I suspect most readers' instinctive reaction is: "Oh no, you're not." But he does. The feature is actually a lively but otherwise straightforward history of St Pancras station. At intervals through its 1,150 words the writer reminds us of the grout. After a couple of hundred words he is saying: "Both this grout and what it does are almost unbearably exciting. But you've got to work up to it, so first you must know about . . ." and off he goes into the history of the station. At one point he's stroking the grout. Later, approaching the end of the piece, he encourages us to stick with him: "Bear with me – we're nearly back to the grout."

I'll leave you to find out what the significance of the grout is by reading the piece, but it's a masterly example of how to introduce and sustain a thread that takes the reader right through your feature.

Here are two intros to features that I wrote. It's up to others to judge whether they are any good, but I'll explain why I wrote them as I did:

5 **A steady drip of Welsh rain falls from the high, round-arched apex of the concrete roof in Our Lady Star of the Sea. It lands with a metronomic tick on a green plastic kneeler, as if time were running out for this unique, modernist church.**

**http://aseasideparish.blogspot.com/2008/08/our-lady-star-of-sea-amlwch-anglese.html**

I wanted an intro that communicated the atmosphere in an amazing church sitting on a cliff top in North Wales and slowly falling into ruin. While I was standing in it with the priest, the drip of water that I describe caught my attention, and seemed to me to offer a powerful yet simple and visually arresting indication of the state the place was in. In the intro I tried to include the place (Wales), that it's wet, that it's on the coast, some sense of the unusual design of the church, and the fact it is falling into ruin. And I wanted to do that in under 50 words.

6 **Blackpool is "noted for fresh air and fun", Skegness is "So bracing", Brighton . . . well, in the words of Keith Waterhouse: "Brighton looks like a town that is helping the police with their enquiries."**

**http://aseasideparish.blogspot.com/2007/09/st-john-baptist-brighton.html**

The English seaside evokes nostalgia in those old enough to remember it before everyone took to jetting to the sun in the summer. Each significant seaside town has its own character, and Brighton's is slightly disreputable. As I was going to go on to tell the story of George IV and the secret wife he kept in the town I wanted to establish its racy character right at the start, and show that there was some history behind the town's reputation.

## *When do you write the intro?*

With news, it's good practice to get the intro first. Once you have, penning the rest of the story is fairly straightforward.

With a feature, it isn't always easy to get the intro right until a lot of the body of the feature is written. I often find that I have actually begun at the second par, and that the real intro suggests itself at some point in the writing process – sometimes not until the end.

## *Some useful structures to follow in a feature*

Let's continue with our footballer in a coma. We have the first two elements in our structure – the hook and then the focus of the piece – where do we go from there?

We have several aspects of the story we want to cover. After our focus, at element two, we begin to deal with those issues. As our feature is going to be driven by interviews – with victims, experts and commentators – we can adopt a very simple but effective order in which we have:

### *Quote, transition, quote*

This is a useful, and very simple, structure for when we have a substantial element of interview in our feature. You want to cover several areas, and you'll quote the person for several pars as you address each point. Between these segments you need a smooth transition, taking them from one area of discussion to the next. If you interview more than one person, you can use the transition to move on to the next person you'd like to quote.

So, with our footballer, our third element of the feature might be his wife on the shock of the injury and how life is so different now.

Among the other elements we have to place might be interviews with other sports stars or their families, quotes from a sports psychologist, quotes from a team manager, quotes from a sports agent. The order we place them in depends on the quality of their quotes, and we use a transition between each.

If we have a feature that is not based nearly so heavily on interviews, but is structured around an examination of an issue, an industry, a problem, we can use a similar approach to structure. I call that . . .

### *The simple points-in-order approach*

This is closest to the inverted triangle, and is widely used in B2B titles, where they often see features as extended news stories which, while topical, will go beyond the strict news peg to look at – say – a trend in a market.

In consumer publications the points-in-order structure can be used in features that are heavily factual and in which there are quotes but no extended interviewing or colour.

To write these you should make a list of the main areas covered. There might be five or six of them. Then you can slot all the dozens of separate facts and quotes you have gathered into these categories.

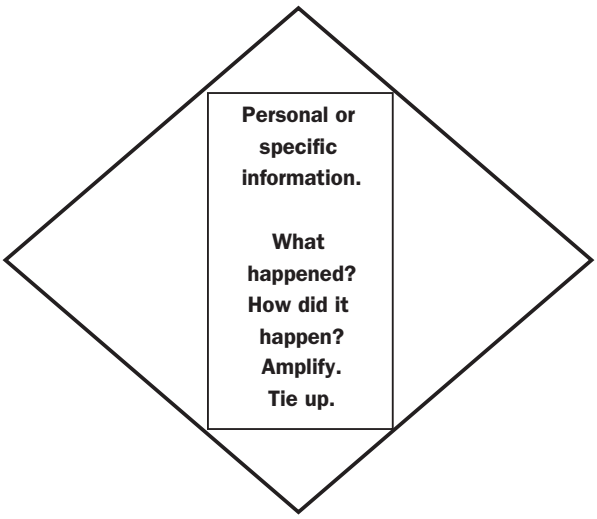
The intro might be a very factual one, so you should pull the key points together and create your intro and second and third pars. These opening pars should create the focus of the feature, covering all the main points you will expand upon later.

### *The diamond*

This structure works well when we have a strong news story but have decided to introduce it with a personal tale. The personal tale is an upright triangle, drawing the reader into the story, engaging their emotions. Then comes the peg – the news angle – of the feature. That is pretty much the same as the top line of the inverted triangle. From there, the feature continues much as a news story would, amplifying each point and tying up loose ends.

This is another simple structure. You can turn a news story containing a short case study into a feature, very often, by taking the case study from the body of the text and promoting it to

the top, so it replaces the hard-news intro. That hard-news intro drops down and forms the wide point where the upright triangle meets the inverted one. Like this:




*The hourglass*

This is an inverted triangle balanced on an upright one – point to point. So the feature begins in a strongly newsy way – following the inverted pyramid with material in descending order of importance. Then in the middle, once the newsy half of the feature is told, it flips. From here we start slowly, perhaps going back to the very beginning of the story and telling things chronologically.

For example, in a feature about a major crime, you could start with the actual crime and recount the main events as you would in a news story, then switch to a chronological account of how the crime was allegedly planned and executed. That's what John Follain has done in "Is this the face of a killer?" in the *Sunday Times Magazine*:

**http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article3159584.ece**

The feature is about Amanda Knox, an American student who was in custody awaiting a murder trail when the feature was written. The victim, allegedly dispatched by her and boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito, was the British student Meredith Kercher. The piece follows this structure:

1 A newsy intro establishing that Knox is a key suspect in the case, followed by an inverted triangle structure in which the case against Knox and other defendants is outlined. This tapers off to a summary of the autopsy report, at the narrow bottom of the first, inverted triangle.

2 Then we come to the opening of the second, upright triangle. It begins: "Knox was born and grew up in Seattle . . ." and takes a chronological sweep through her life, moving through the crime and Knox's imprisonment. At the end it comes right up to date, with the latest entry in her prison diary.

### *Using geography as a structure*

Travel features about a journey are a clear example of this technique, but geography can also be the most logical way to organise a general feature.

For example, the *Sunday Times Magazine* ran a feature called "The Irony Curtain" which was about the stark contrast that remained on the ground after the wall between East and West Germany was torn down. It is as if an invisible wall still exists.

After the set-up and the introduction of the idea that a wall remains in people's heads, the focus reads:

> **To find out why, there could hardly be a more poignant place to start looking than Wittenberge, and from there trace the stories of those along a section of where the border once followed the Elbe river - across which East and West German soldiers once regularly exchanged fire.**

**http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/christine_toomey/article395779.ece**

### *Using scenes as structure*

This technique is often used in profiles, where the writer observes his or her subject in a range of situations.

For example, the *Sunday Times Magazine* ran a profile of the Lib Dem MP Lembit Opik under the headline: "Political Party Animal".

**http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article3196942.ece**

Each scene is used to show the subject in a different setting, and to reveal something new about them and their life. So the scenes in this case include: a pub in the MP's Welsh constituency; out at night in the constituency; in the hospital that put him back together after a paragliding accident; and in parliament. Not quite the entire feature is set in these places – there are asides to run through his past, and to talk about his girlfriend, but the locations are the unifying structure of the feature.

### *Ending a feature*

A feature needs a strong ending. That's another distinct difference between it and a news story, which tapers away at the end and can be cut at any point leading up to it. Sometimes the circle technique – looping back to the beginning to reprise the scene you began with – works well. At other times you need some other strong final point: a good quote, a key fact, a shocking statistic, a sobering thought.

Here's an example of the circle technique. Polly Vernon's feature about Paul McKenna in the *Observer*, headlined "Look into my eyes", starts: "Paul McKenna wants to nail me into a coffin. 'Go on!' he says. 'It'll be great!' I'm cautious. 'Uh . . . not sure, actually . . .' I say."

**http://www.guardian.co.uk/theobserver/2004/dec/12/features.magazine67**

Polly travels around with McKenna, and finds the man she expected to loathe grows on her. Eventually she trusts him enough to allow him to hypnotise her.

The piece ends: "After I've no idea how long, he wakes me up. I was, he says, properly gone. I believe him. And then Paul McKenna nails me into a coffin, and I don't mind a bit."

### *The broken-up feature*

Increasingly, features are not presented as one read but broken up into small sections. Typically there is a set-up – 200–500 words in which the subject is established and explored, followed by boxes in which various aspects of the issue are focused on. The boxes might be interviews with contrasting people. This format lends itself well to surveys of products or services and is often used in consumer magazines.

## *Some essentials and some pitfalls*

### *Beware of dealing in generalities*

Many features fail on this point. Use specifics, use detail. Specifics give us a picture in our heads, generalities do not. But use telling, relevant detail. Fiction writers are sometimes told that if they show the reader a revolver, they should make sure they use it. Do the same. As with "Life in the Day", dwell on the relevant detail.

### *Use quotes and attribution to give your feature authority*

Another lesson from news – don't get lazy or turn the feature into an opinion piece unless that is exactly what is required.

*Don't let chronology dictate your structure*

Chronology can be the best way to structure a feature, but not if that slows it down. Dip in and out of it. Focus on some points in the story, move swiftly over others. And even if chronology is the best way to structure the body of the feature, grab the best bit for your intro, wherever it comes chronologically.

*Don't forget to tell the reader what you are doing – in analysis and fact-based features*

Remember the advantages of the inverted triangle approach. It ensures that all key points are introduced – however briefly – high up in the story.

In an information-heavy feature, make sure you do the same. That gives readers a clear guide to where the piece is going. Otherwise, particularly with a long, discursive feature, they might find new and important angles on the story that they weren't expecting.

Your standfirst can help a good deal here.

## How to write a profile

A profile is defined as a portrait of a person which, rather than having an interview with an individual at its core, builds up a picture of them by talking to those who know them well. Often the subject is not spoken to at all, only their friends, enemies, colleagues, partners, victims – however many people it takes to build up the picture of them. Such profiles are often about a man or woman who is in the news.

The *Observer* runs good profiles. Here's one of the actor Jack Black:

**http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2005/dec/11/usa.world**

The profile begins with the news peg – the actor's hugely successful current film – and then tells his story through quotes from those who have worked with him, including Tim Robbins and Gwyneth Paltrow. Stephen Frears, director of his breakthrough film *High Fidelity*, remembers that "people from all over the studio would come to watch his rushes".

His early life and career to date are covered, as well as the key point: why he is significant and worth reading a profile of. So we get this: "In just over five years, Black has gone from being a man who was difficult to cast to being almost the embodiment of the zeitgeist. He has redefined the notion of the enfant terrible."

## *How to write a review*

There are many ways to approach reviewing, but the following is a tried and tested method that works. Follow this format and you have a good chance of turning in something that your commissioning editor likes. It works whatever you are reviewing: book, film, band, exhibition, restaurant or play.

### *In general*

Pick a theme. You can't say much in a short review, so what you include should be built on a coherent thread that takes the reader from start to finish. For instance, in this review from the *Independent* of the singer Morrissey the piece begins with the reviewer talking about how much he used to love him:

> **http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/reviews/first-night-morrisey-the-roundhouse-chalk-farm-london-771698.html**

He moves on to the disappointments that Morrissey can drag his admirers through, then ends up: "I still love you but slightly less than I used to", which has the added bonus of bringing things full circle and creating a neat ending.

### *First 100 words*

Get straight into the story. Relate something specific that has resonance.

It might be the pivotal scene in a film, play or book, or the moment in a live performance that was most memorable or telling. You can put yourself into the review if you like – after all, a review is a personal opinion – and if what you are reviewing clearly has importance for you that will give extra energy to the piece.

In a *Sunday Times* review of Christina Lamb's *Small Wars Permitting*, about being a foreign and war correspondent, Patrick French writes in his intro: "It is 2000, and Christina Lamb is in Lagos, working against a deadline without any leads to locate the home of the family of Damilola Taylor, a 10-year-old Nigerian boy who has been stabbed to death in Peckham." Immediately we are in the thick of it, alongside a correspondent as she tackles a seemingly impossible task.

### *Next 100 words*

Now give the context and the necessary background detail.

Having hooked the reader with an entertaining opening you can give the bigger picture – why this performance, book or whatever is important/worth reading/demands to be seen. You

can include here background information such as the film on which the director or star's reputation depends. You can say why the thing you are reviewing is significant enough to be written about. If it is brilliant, average or dreadful, you can say that here.

With Morrissey it's because there has been a huge revival in his popularity. With Christina Lamb, French writes: "Not all journalism deserves to be placed between the covers of a book. Small Wars Permitting . . . succeeds because it is so lively. Lamb does not enjoy theorising. Her interest is the human story behind global events."

If you are introducing a performer, author or other who is likely to be new to your reader, help them decide whether they are interested by making comparisons with performers/authors they will have heard of.

In another *Sunday Times* band review, of the relatively unknown Big Linda, Lisa Verrico gives this context: "The ludicrously named Big Linda are a London-based hard-rock quartet who could have stepped straight from the 1970s. Their largest debt is to Led Zeppelin, whose scorching riffs, powerhouse drums and bluesy boogie they steal for most of tonight's up-tempo tracks."

### *250 words*

This is the main body of the review. Make the key points you want to make. You'll probably have room for about three or four. Write about the performance, film or book in detail. Identify the best and worst bits. Treat the performance, book or whatever chronologically if that works.

The Morrissey review goes through the highlights and low points of the performance. The Lamb book review covers the main places, themes, stories and characters in the book.

### *Ending: 50 words*

Round things off either by finishing the chronology, looping back to the beginning or with another telling point. Don't let the review just trail away.

Morrissey we've mentioned. The Lamb review ends soberingly with a section about Zimbabwe, which she describes as "the most heartbreaking story I have ever covered". The final quote is Lamb remembering what an impressive place Zimbabwe was before Mugabe devastated it, with the best-educated population in Africa, neat buildings and lines of children with freshly washed uniforms. The reviewer ends: "Now all that has gone."

## *Columns and other first-person pieces*

It's all about me, me, me. Many journalists aspire to column-writing. Far too many achieve it. Too many columnists run out of things to write about. A few are naturals. The persona they

establish and the things they write about – which might be just the mundanities of everyday life – strike a chord with the reader. To do so they have to embody a certain truth. Readers need to be able to identify with the columnist and their predicament.

Others are ostensibly writing reviews but a good three-quarters of the piece is about them, and it is this bit they are read for. Jeremy Clarkson and Giles Coran are both masters of the column that, whether ostensibly about cars or food, is really about them.

### *Finding your voice*

When writing personal pieces, finding your voice is hugely important. The column won't work without it. Competent general features writers, and star interviews, also do it. Their voice in the feature gives it an appeal and a value all of its own. It becomes unique. That's how you become a star writer, as opposed to a jobbing hack.

## *Comment, opinion and editors' letters*

You might think your days of writing such pieces are far away but, particularly if your first job is on a B2B publication with a staff of just one or two, you may well find yourself called upon to write comment.

The thing about an opinion column is that it has to have one. An opinion, that is. Sounds obvious, but often they don't. Poor opinion pieces say, "On the one hand this, on the other hand that", and "I think we can all agree to disagree."

### *Leaders*

Typically found in newspapers, leaders express the opinion of the publication (and often its proprietor) and go unsigned. Usually they relate to subjects covered at length in the newspaper – major current stories or important issues that are being covered in other sections. They are the place where the paper reviews what has been revealed in the news or other pages, analyses the import of it and gives a view. The paper often strives for balance in its news reporting of the issues covered, but then comes down on one side or other in the leader.

### *Comment pieces*

These are often called op-ed pieces in quality newspapers – traditionally because they appeared opposite the editorial page on which the leaders appear. These are signed and present the view of the writer, which may not be the same as that of the publication. A balanced debate is not expected here. The writer is more like an advocate for a particular point of view, and there may be other writers advocating counter-positions elsewhere on the page or in the rest of the paper.

### *Editors' letters*

Usually found early on in consumer and B2B magazines, they often merely introduce the main pieces in the mag: "Have we got a great edition for you!" Sometimes they are more like leaders, expressing the view of the publication, and will tend to pick up on a contentious issue covered in the news or other sections of the mag. It's the latter definition that is relevant to our current discussion.

One thing is common to all of them – they need a strong opinion, clearly enunciated. To get that we need to consider these points:

- **What is our attitude to the issue?** Are we worried, angry, puzzled, outraged or wryly amused? What tone should we adopt?
- **What do we have to say that is new?** It is not always possible to find something, but it's much better if we can.
- **Do we have a goal in mind?** Are we hoping to influence debate in material ways – to shift or support public opinion, to make legislators take notice, or industry figures adopt a particular practice or policy? Perhaps we want an official response.
- **Do we see a solution?** It is very handy if we do, because we can develop a cogent argument and conduct an analysis that leads up – hopefully logically – to the outcome, or the course of action, that we are advocating.
- **What are we adding to the debate?** Is this a view that has not so far been expressed? Do we have new material in our paper or magazine that takes things forward, and that facilitates a concurrent advance in the debate?

We must present a lively, compelling argument, and adopt a position that is a logical outcome of our analysis of events.

### *An example from* The Financial Times

The FT's approach is typical. Its leader writer takes the building blocks of the opinion, the factual background to the views he or she will express, from the paper's news reporting. Here's an analysis of that process in action on a day when one big story was a row over the supply of Russian gas to the Ukraine.

A page-one story had the headline "Russian gas row hits Europe". It included these points:

- European governments urge Russia and Ukraine to resolve the row
- European Union to hold a crisis meeting in Brussels tomorrow
- Malcolm Wicks, energy minister, says Britain should not get involved in the row but suggested Russia be "mindful of its reputation" as a reliable supplier
- Wicks warns that prolonged disruption could influence the outcome of the government's energy review

- The International Energy Agency warns that Russia's international reputation could be jeopardised by its actions.

Several stories on an inside page cover other aspects of the issue. These stories include the following points:

- In a meeting with ambassadors from the European Union, the US and Japan, Mr Yuschenko said countries that relied on Ukraine's pipeline to deliver Russian gas would suffer no interruptions
- The dispute is likely to boost arguments for nuclear power
- Russia has become increasingly explicit about its intention to use its energy reserves as a foreign policy tool
- 75 per cent of EU gas will be imported by 2020, most provided by Gazprom, Russia's state-controlled gas monopoly
- The EU's top energy official warns that European consumers should not be used as "hostages" in the conflict over prices
- The EU will have to play a role in developing a long-term solution to the problem
- A commentator is quoted as saying: "I am surprised at how little the US has reacted to Russia policy overall . . . Mr Bush's relationship with Putin has not translated into policy gains."

### *Leader says*

Context and information can be added in a leader that is not new or relevant to the individual news stories. The leader picks up on the main points in these reports and adds a gloss of wider context to the story, and its opinion of what Britain, the EU, America and others should do now. It includes these points:

- Moscow has legitimate grounds for complaint in its dispute with Kiev but its actions are irresponsible and it will damage its reputation as a trustworthy energy supplier
- The Kremlin's moves are largely political: it is taking revenge for Mr Yuschenko's victory in Ukraine
- Russia is irritated at Kiev's bids to join the EU and NATO
- The EU is failing to respond with sufficient urgency
- The Union needs more integrated energy policies
- The best way to deal with Russia in the energy market is by presenting a united front – or at least a coordinated bargaining position
- Mr Putin wants to use Moscow's presidency of the G8 to address world energy policies. The EU, the US and Japan must tell Mr Putin that if he wants to keep his place among the world's leaders he must start behaving like one.

12C2

## Writing news at the standard expected of trainee journalists employed in the media

It's one thing being able to tackle pretty much any story that is thrown at you on your first day of your first job, which might be with a publisher that covers platforms including some or most of the following: an online radio and/or TV station, a local or national news website, a local or national newspaper, a B2B magazine, a consumer magazine.

It's quite another, sadly, to pass the exams that make you a qualified journalist. We can't go into great detail here, for obvious reasons, on how to pass the exams you will be set, whether they are from your university or college, or an accrediting body such as the National Council for the Training of Journalists. But we can offer a sensible approach, and offer some exercises that will help you approach exam questions.

Think of your exams in relation to doing the job as you might think of the driving test in relation to going out on the road unaccompanied. In the driving test it is drilled into you to mirror, signal, manoeuvre, to look down side streets, to stay a couple of mph below the speed limit and generally behave in a way that causes intense frustration to other road users.

There is a reason for driving like a dork. It's to convince the examiner that you are safe behind the wheel. Journalism exams often perform a similar function. They show you are a safe pair of hands: that you won't commit gross errors or, most important, do something that costs your employer money.

This section is about working as a safe pair of journalistic hands. You'll also be working against the clock. Your written journalism exams are likely to involve you taking raw information, including press releases or material from press agencies or other journalists, and turning it into a tight, coherent report.

You may be asked to re-purpose material so that it will work on your website – particularly for scanners. So let's have a go at that. Below you will find two mock exam questions. Read the instructions carefully, particularly the information on the title which, for exam purposes, you are writing for. Remember what we have said all along about the importance of identifying your audience and giving them the story that they will be interested in.

You will find model answers to these exercises at the end of this chapter.

**on the website**

- **Find the text below. If it is easier, you can cut and paste from the website into your exam answer to avoid writing everything out from scratch.**

One final point: while I based these questions on real-life stories, I have adapted them for the purposes of the exercises. So if the people and organisations don't look entirely familiar that's because I've invented some of them. So don't try Googling any element of the stories to check names and facts. Just go with the material you have here.

## *First mock exam question*

For this exercise you are on a fictional local newspaper – the *Richmount Times* in the fictional town of Richmount. That means that you should not attempt to check anything in the copy below. You must base the story you write solely on what follows.

One of your newspaper's reporters has just filed an exclusive on the latest development in an important story. You have been following – in the printed edition and online at **www.therichmounttimes.co.uk** – your local council's attempts to promote green motoring in the borough. Last week you covered the fact that a plan to charge residents more to park gas-guzzling 4×4s in on-street residents' parking bays had received an enthusiastic welcome from residents in a consultation that the council had just undertaken.

The copy just filed says that the council is to be the first in Britain to offer interest-free loans to residents who would like to buy electric cars. The council has also announced the charges it will impose on other cars. Electric cars will be exempt from the council parking charges. The reporter has filed a brief story to you, and is now working hard on a major piece for the next edition of the newspaper. You also have last week's story, which gives some useful detail.

The online editor wants a head and sell on this exclusive online asap and a 400-word story in 40 minutes. So you have 40 minutes to complete this exercise.

You must:

- Rewrite the copy you have been given as you see fit, merging the two pieces into one coherent story of about 400 words. Do not go more than 25 words over or under this total or you will be penalised
- There is no time to get a graphic done, but the online editor has asked that you get in some of the essential figures that show the financial impact of the move. "Do your best to make the dense bits readable," he said. You have also been unable to get any fresh quotes from those who oppose the scheme

- Give it a head of five–seven words, and a sell of up to 25 words
- Use side headings, bulleted lists or other devices to make the story as easy to read as possible
- Add ideas for external links at the end of your copy.

*New copy*

Interest-free loans are to be made available by Richmount Council to borough residents to buy a new brand of electric car. In addition the council is engaged in a pilot scheme with manufacturer ElectroV to supply the cars – the Milkfloat, which normally retail at £6,995 – for £5,495. The move is a first for a UK council.

The deal was announced today at a press conference at which the council also unveiled its previously trailed sliding scale of charges for residents' parking. The scheme, under which Milkfloats and a number of other low-polluting cars will park free in residents' parking bays in the borough, will see some residents pay more to park.

The council issued a list of examples of charges that will replace the current £100 per year annual flat rate charge.

Under the plans, the Milkfloat and other cars that emit less than 110 grams of $CO_2$ per kilometre they drive, such as the Honda Insight petrol-electric hybrid and the Smart diesel, would pay nothing.

Cars such as the Toyota Prius, petrol Smart car, Citroën C1 and Peugeot 107 would get a 50 per cent discount, while cars including the Mini One, Ford Fiesta, Peugeot 307 and Nissan Micra would see a 10 per cent hike.

Cars with reasonably low emissions such as a Ford Ka, Fiat Panda or Toyota Yaris would be entitled to a 10 per cent reduction, and pay £90 for their permit.

The Ford Mondeo 1.8 petrol, Vauxhall Vectra 1.8 petrol and the Toyota Avensis 1.8 petrol would all pay an extra 50 per cent, as would diesel versions of the Maxda 5 2.0i, BMW 3 Series 330d and Mercedes Benz C200.

A  Nissan X-Trail, Land Rover Freelander and BMW 5 Series would face double the current charge.

Cars that will cost £300 to park include the Jaguar X type, Range Rover 4.4, Porsche 911 Carrera and Renault Espace.

Lars Kingstone, spokesman for ElectroV, a company based in Birmingham that previously manufactured air conditioning units and only launched the Milkfloat two-seater electronic car onto the market last year, said he was delighted with the

partnership. "This is great for us, a company just trying to make its way in the field of electronic motoring, and great for the residents of Richmount.

"We hope to partner with many more local authorities."

The cars have a range of 60 miles before they need recharging.

*Background copy*

Plans to encourage greener motoring by charging Richmount residents with gas-guzzling cars more to park will come into force after a council consultation revealed that over 70 per cent of townsfolk backed the proposal in a consultation.

Six weeks ago Richmount Council began a survey to ask residents whether they would support a plan to replace the current £100 flat fee for parking in residents' bays outside their homes with a sliding scale of charges depending on the $CO_2$ emissions of their car.

A total of 8,350 residents and 3,000 local businesses were consulted.

The results of the consultation reveal that 72 per cent of respondents supported the plans and 18 per cent were opposed to them. The remaining 10 per cent were undecided.

It was also revealed in the consultation that 78 per cent of those who responded said the threat of being charged extra to park outside their homes would make them consider changing their vehicle to a less polluting model, with just 22 per cent saying it would not impact upon their future behaviour.

Councillor Simon Coles, leader of Richmount Council, said he was greatly encouraged by the results of the survey.

"I am hugely encouraged by the fact that 78 per cent have indicated that they would be prepared to take practical action and switch to a less polluting vehicle. This is highly significant.

"These proposals were always going to spark a fierce debate; we have never had any illusions about that fact. We brought them forward for consultation because we believe that they are the right thing to do. We never expected they would be universally popular. So to find that a substantial majority of local residents support them is very encouraging.

"Climate change is the single most important issue facing us. Our proposed $CO_2$

charging scheme has always been about much more than Richmount. We hoped to provide a national lead that other authorities would follow.

"We in the Town First party have since been hugely encouraged by indications from other authorities that they intend to introduce similar schemes. If policies like this are to have a real effect in the long term then everyone must adopt them. And I hope that Richmount can lead the way."

Cllr Coles hinted that there would be a dramatic announcement shortly regarding the scheme, which he described as a first for any council in Britain.

John Bonham, from the Bradburn Eco Party, said: "I proposed this three years ago. It's great news. It will definitely influence people's car-buying decisions. It is bound to reduce carbon emissions but we really need to be reducing driving."

But councillors In the opposition Freedom Party have labelled the idea a stealth tax.

Their leader, Councillor Sandi Stratford, said she was sure that most families would have to pay more to park: "This is a huge stealth tax increase on local families. We are in favour of green taxes, but any increase in green tax should be matched with a corresponding reduction on families and businesses elsewhere. This will hit average families."

She added that the consultation was a farce, with only 5 per cent of residents involved.

Model answer at end of chapter.

## *Second mock exam question*

You work on the online edition of a fictional title called *Off-licence Trade*, a business-to-business publication that is widely read by shopkeepers and the managers of supermarkets that are licensed to sell alcohol. The material that follows, while based on actual stories, has been fictionalised and adapted for the purposes of this exercise, so don't try to check anything in it with external sources. Just go with what you are given here.

The online editor wants two pieces of breaking news merged into one story and published on the website as soon as possible. Both have serious implications for your readers.

You must:

- Rewrite the copy you have been given as you see fit, merging the two pieces into one coherent story that has a head of five–seven words and a sell of up to 25 words. The story should total about 400 words.

- Use side headings, bulleted lists or other devices to make the story as easy to read as possible.
- Add some external links at the end of your copy.

You have 40 minutes.

*First piece of copy*

The government's public health campaigns are not working, say doctors and nurses, and they want price rises instead. Two royal colleges have today published surveys in which they asked gastroenterologists, hepatologists, acute physicians and nurses for their opinion of government initiatives on alcohol-related harm. 84% said public health campaigns did not work and 81% thought people would drink less if the price went up.

Professor Ian Gilmore, president of the Royal College of Physicians, which carried out the survey with the Royal College of Nursing, said: "While informing the public through health campaigns is important, these findings show that frontline doctors and nurses treating patients with drink problems do not believe that this is enough to reverse our binge drinking culture and must be linked to tough actions on cheap alcohol and round the clock availability."

The Royal College of Physicians wants to see alcohol priced by the unit rather than the bottle, which would raise the cost of cheap but strong spirit-based drinks and ciders sold by supermarkets. Scotland has already pledged to introduce this policy.

Professor Gilmore, who is a liver specialist, said: "Talking about it isn't good enough. The chancellor did put duty up above inflation in the last budget. But if they put duty up a modest amount it doesn't get passed on to the customers in the supermarkets, where there are deep discounts."

Concurring with the view that the government is doing too little, Dr Peter Carter, chief executive and general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, said: "Nurses have said time and time again that the government must take more drastic action to tackle the growing issue of alcohol misuse.

"Better regulation of the labelling, sale and advertising of alcoholic drinks, as well as widespread education on the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption, is needed to curb this significant problem."

Sir Liam Donaldson, the chief medical officer, called for a minimum price per unit of alcohol in his last report, but the idea was immediately rejected by the prime minister, who said the sensible majority of moderate drinkers should not have to pay for the

excesses of the few. Gilmore said unit pricing would mean minimal increases in the drinks bill for most – £1.50 a month on average for the moderate drinker.

The Wine and Spirit Trade Association said it was disappointed that doctors and nurses did not support government alcohol campaigns. "The Royal Colleges are wrong to suggest their health expertise qualifies them to comment on product pricing," said spokesman Gavin Partington. "Alcohol consumption has been falling . . . and as ministers recently acknowledged it would be wrong to use minimum pricing to punish the majority."

*Second piece of copy*

Drink-fuelled disorder should be combated through a ban on pub happy hours and loss-leader supermarket promotions in which alcohol is sold at below cost price, say MPs.

Reckless drinking is placing a heavy burden on police resources according to the Home Affairs Select Committee.

Legislation setting a minimum price on alcohol would be one possible solution for England and Wales, MPs said.

Their call comes in a report on challenges facing police forces in the 21st century. Ministers responded by saying that they would look carefully at the report's recommendations.

Police face a host of pressures, including public expectations over minor crime, rapid population change and the number of murder suspects released on bail, said the report. However, the report went on, the evidence showed the biggest problem faced by police forces was violence and disorder caused by excessive drinking of cheap alcohol.

The shift patterns of one force, it said, were dictated by the need to have enough officers available to deal with the fall-out of weekend bouts of drunken disorder.

Many forces could not meet the public's expectations of high-profile visible policing at other times, despite currently having record numbers in uniform, because of drink-fuelled crime, the report said.

Almost half of all violent crime victims report that their attacker was under the influence of alcohol, according to official figures. Increased police powers to tackle

drunkenness were not working and powers to review or revoke premises' alcohol licences were not being fully used, it said.

Other official figures on the cost of goods over time show alcohol has become much more affordable in the last three decades.

In Scotland, new licensing laws include powers to fix alcohol prices to stop cut-price promotions and happy hours, and ministers in Edinburgh say they might seek to set minimum prices for drink.

Keith Vaz, chairman of the committee, said retailers must end a "pile it high, sell it cheap" culture around drink.

He accused supermarkets of flouting the spirit of a voluntary code on alcohol sales.

He told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: "We cannot have, on one hand, a world of alcohol promotions for profit that fuels surges of crime and disorder and, on the other, the police diverting all their resources to cope with it.

"At the moment you have a situation where so much of police time is taken up dealing with alcohol-related crime. Happy hours lead to unhappy communities. Loss leaders in supermarkets cause real misery to city centres on a Saturday night."

Richard Dodd, from the British Retail Consortium, told BBC Breakfast that supermarkets were being unfairly demonised. "Supermarkets believe in responsible drinking too, and they do an enormous amount to achieve that, in terms of know-your-limits unit labelling and preventing underage purchases of alcohol, but there's an awful lot of nonsense talked about this idea of below-cost selling.

"Because, if you just stop and think about it for a minute, no business could survive – let alone thrive – if it was routinely selling large amounts of product at less than it was actually paying for it."

But Don Shenker, chief executive of Alcohol Concern, said the sale of cheap alcohol in supermarkets was a real problem, particularly affecting young people: "By the time they have gone out, they're completely drunk, they're much more at risk of having an accident, of being a victim of a crime and that's causing around £7bn worth of cost to the police."

The report said MPs remained sceptical about whether recently introduced Alcohol Disorder Zones, which force pubs and clubs to contribute towards the costs of policing drink-related crime, could work.

A Home Office spokesman said: "We know the police and the public remain concerned about alcohol-related disorder.

"We have given the police, licensing authorities and trading standards officers a range of tough powers to tackle alcohol-related disorder, including on-the-spot fines, confiscating alcohol in public places and closing down premises that flout the law.

**"Alongside this, the Department of Health has commissioned an independent review on the effects of alcohol price, promotion, consumption and harm, which will be published shortly."**

Model answer at end of chapter.

12C3

## Creating in-depth packages for websites

This section will cover building an archive or special report on a key subject, and will include:

- Identifying a topic that has been covered regularly over a period of time, and that has a high level of public interest
- Selecting key items to add to an archive or special report on this subject
- Building the archive or special report, creating a welcome screen that sets out the subject matter and contains links, presented logically, to the individual story files
- Either importing these files into a designated area of the website or creating links to the relevant files but leaving them in their current locations
- Ensuring, where files are imported into the site, that text is evergreened: references such as "yesterday" and "tomorrow" are replaced with references to the relevant date – e.g. "on 14 July 2007".

Traditional publishers often feel themselves at a disadvantage when it comes to establishing a credible presence online. They often don't grasp the culture of online multimedia journalism as instinctively as younger, web-savvy outsiders do. They can both fear and look down on untrained practitioners. They come from a world in which you had to be rich and powerful to own the means of production. Now, and this is a unifying theme of this book and web project, anyone can publish.

But what traditional publishers have that is absolute gold dust, and which they hold uniquely, is a breadth and depth of high-quality content. Take a company such as Haymarket, for instance, which owns an array of consumer and B2B magazines that are usually long established, and often market leaders in their respective fields. One such title is *Autocar*. That became dominant, in print, by giving readers a pretty much unparalleled guide to cars. Its editors and writers were and are experts in the field. There are dozens of Haymarket magazines that are pre-eminent in their special area.

That unique depth of content is something that online start-ups can't begin to marshal, which means that Haymarket and other publishers can punch with great weight online.

## on the website

- Find a video interview with Mark Payton, digital editorial director at Haymarket Consumer Media, outlining the company's power online. Here is an extract from it:

> Audiences now have a greater expectation of immediacy; they're accustomed to instantaneous news coverage. But I'm convinced that there's a need to make sense of the noise: the Associated Press research that was presented at the [World Editors'] Forum showed that 18 to 34-year-olds are crying out for context and depth.

Payton says that to compete in a "democratised" online environment, in which anyone can publish a basic site in minutes, the professional journalist's ability to research and place a story in context will become more important than ever.

So it's depth that gives traditional publishers the edge:

> Online I can become vertical in a way that I could never afford to in print. So I can take your wildest fetish and exploit it to its absolute extreme. So if you want – in our case – a car buyers' guide, we can just keep on going. And we can indulge you fully, no matter what type of car you are into, or what your outlook on motoring is, we can take it to its logical extreme. As an editorial director I find that really exciting.

So this section is about depth. It's traditional print media's big answer to all the online start-ups: something they can do because they have the content.

Many newspapers and magazines have put their enormous archives online, and some are proving successful in charging for access to them. But it's not just about archives, it's also about creating a rich content area that offers in-depth analysis of a particular topic that is of interest, concern and value to readers. We did a bit of that in Chapter Two when we created a series of screens dedicated to a particular subject. We are going to do much more of it now.

Let's remember our family-tree-style web structure here. In creating a special area we will be looking for a topic that is in the news regularly, and likely to remain so for some months or even years. Big subjects like this – the world economic situation is a good example – are complex and evolving, but there is a core of information that is always relevant to an understanding of them.

A newspaper or magazine that covers sport in great detail might create areas that contain a great deal of information. A national newspaper might have a Premiership site area that has a great depth of information about each team, its players and their form. There could be a good deal of historic information, including statistics. A local newspaper might create an area that contained reports on all matches played in local amateur leagues – far more information than they could ever present in print.

If you edit a history magazine and website, you might create a site area about major historic events to satisfy readers' interest in drilling down to discover details they didn't know, or to check facts, or to conduct research. A World War II area would cover the origins and causes of the conflict, the course of the battles and the aftermath.

That's a useful example in that it happened a while ago. Most of what we put in this section is fixed – it's not going to change or be made irrelevant by new events. However, many of the topics we select for special content areas will be evolving every day.

But with the world economic system – the credit crunch – there are aspects of our coverage that mirror the World War II example. The origins of the crisis are set. How it developed to date is to a large extent set, although we'll need to add to it. What this means is we can create a tidy archive of material that will not need updating. Of course, much will be added to it over the days, weeks and months, but the core is static.

So we set up a site area, using our family-tree approach, which has a landing page that sets out what is covered and provides links to the next level down.

## *Identifying a topic that has been covered regularly over a period of time, and that has a high level of public interest*

So first we need to identify a topic. On a local website that might be schools and their Ofsted ratings and other material about them and their performance. On a B2B magazine it might be an issue that has an impact on the industry we cover. Perhaps a piece of government legislation has hit the industry hard and we are campaigning for its repeal. Say we are the *Morning Advertiser*, which serves publicans. The smoking ban of a few years ago was a major issue that it covered in depth and which readers wanted to refer to over a long period.

## *Selecting key items to add to an archive or special report on this subject*

Once we have our topic we need all relevant staff to keep an eye out for stories that need to be added to it.

Such an area is very useful, and impresses readers. Many of the major areas we build will tick along most of the time, with reasonable traffic, but as soon as we get a breaking story that takes the issue forward, we run it on our home or main news page and link from it to the archive we have built up. The reader is impressed because they find a wealth of background and valuable additional material available just when they are interested in it. They probably don't realise we had it all along and have just linked to it afresh.

I've concentrated so far on topics that are serious, but they needn't be. If we have a lot of showbiz on our site and the Oscars come around, we can post news stories and build new photo galleries and other elements. We can do that each year, and build a new segment in our Oscars area but retain material from past years. Film fans can look back at the stars and movies that won in the past. Such an area lends itself well to video interviews, movie clips, slide shows of red-carpet moments and striking frocks, and reader comment and other UGC.

## *Building a welcome screen*

The landing page or welcome screen for this area can be linked to from wherever we want – from our home page, from each new individual story that appears in our news pages, and also placed on our permanent nav bar. Clicking on any of those links should take us to a welcome screen that gives the reader a clear guide to what they can find here. If this is level one of the area, level two should be the subdivisions of the subject. At level three will come all the individual items – text reports, video and podcasts, slide shows and so on.

## *Evergreening content*

Evergreening means ensuring, where files are imported into the site, that references such as "yesterday" and "tomorrow" are replaced with references to the relevant date – e.g. "on 14 July 2010".

All this sounds pretty straightforward. But, surprisingly, few multimedia sites do it really well. Let's look at some examples and critique them. First let's look at some sites dedicated to the global financial crisis.

*BBC*

GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS

**http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7731139.stm**

If you go to the page, you'll see it has a good landing page with coherent categories. Latest news stories appear in the main, central content area, while to the right are links organised under headings such as **key stories**, **background and analysis**, and **crisis overview**.

*Daily Telegraph*

FINANCIAL CRISIS

HITACHI
Telegraph.co.uk
Financial Crisis
BoA profits overshadowed by loan book fears
Recession takes its toll on reputations
Bankruptcy: Hardships behind headlines
Chancellor expected to help boost supply of mortgage funds in Budget
Darling: worst recession since Second World War
Cartoons make my life one long laugh

**http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/financetopics/financialcrisis/**

Take a look at this and see what you think.

The problem here is that this is a grouping of stories to do with the financial crisis but there is no anchoring analysis, explanation and overview as there was on the BBC site. You get a wealth of relevant news stories, but they are fed in in date order – newest at the top. Really key stories that are highly relevant, even if some days, weeks or months old, are not highlighted.

That's probably because this area has been generated automatically, using the tags placed on the individual stories. Too many supposed special, in-depth areas or sites use that technique, and the result is highly unsatisfying.

*Guardian*

The *Guardian*, which is in many ways a superlative multimedia offering, also does it. Here are links to three examples:

- **Digital music**

  **http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/downloads**

- **Arts funding**

  **http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/artsfunding**

- **Privacy and the media**

  **http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/privacy**

The problem is that, while there is plenty of relevant content, it is not organised coherently. The reader has to sift through it to try to find the thing they want and, again, context, background and overview are hard to find.

12C4

## Advanced online research

We spoke in Chapter Six about using Technorati to search blogs, searching the tags people put on material in Delicious and other techniques for finding material relevant to our jobs. In this section we will add to that by looking at how to research effectively on the web and where to find leads for news stories online.

### *Getting the most out of Google*

First of all, there are a number of ways of improving our Google searches. Google is great, but a straight Google search can produce a wide array of types of results for your chosen search term. You'll get some news stories, government sites, fact sheets, company websites.

When you are researching for a news story or feature you may well want detail and background that is buried way down the Google results returns and would take a lot of trawling to find. So it pays to refine your Google search, and there are plenty of ways to do that.

Google provides a guide to the ways you can refine your search here:

**http://www.google.com/support/websearch/bin/answer.py?answer=136861**

And here:

**http://www.google.co.uk/help/operators.html**

We'll go through some of them with examples, and look at why, and when, they might be useful.

#### *Narrow your search*

If your first search term produced too many results, you can narrow the returns down by searching among your results. For instance, searching for Avian flu brings up results that are very basic. Wikipedia comes up high on most search returns, and so do fact sheets and one or two news stories. For journalistic research this is not particularly helpful, and slows us down. We usually know the basics and want to drill down to rich information on specific areas.

To narrow down the 4 million plus returns I can click on the **Search within results** button and add some additional search criteria. So I might type in "Human victims 2009".

### *Search for a phrase ("")*

Double quotes around a search term tell Google to look for that phrase, exactly as you have typed it.

### *Search within a specific website (site:)*

If you want to find results from one particular website, you can refine your search term like this: Google allows you to specify that your search results must come from a given website. For example, the query [Iraq site:nytimes.com] will return pages about Iraq but only from nytimes.com. The simpler queries [Iraq nytimes.com] or [Iraq New York Times] will usually be just as good, though they might return results from other sites that mention the *New York Times*.

### *Search within a specified class of site (site:ac)*

If you want results only from, say, government or academic sites you can refine your search by following your search term with the site category: [crime site:gov] or: [crime:site ac]. If you want to search only on sites from a particular country you can use the country identifier from the URL, such as "it" for Italy and "fr" for France.

### *Search with an asterisk or wildcard (*)*

You can use the asterisk, *****, or wildcard, as part of a search term. When you do, Google treats the asterisk as a placeholder for any term. So, for example, if you are researching a politician's voting record, you can use this search term: [Brown voted * on the * bill], and get results that focus on Gordon Brown's voting record.

### *Search with the OR option (OR)*

Words such as "or" would normally be ignored by Google – as would other very common words. But if you use the capitalised OR you can use it to refine your search. So, for example, [crime statistics 2009 OR 2010] will give you results for either of these years. The search term [crime statistics 2009 2010] would only bring results for pages that mentioned both of these years.

### *Search for erased content (cache)*

Searching in Google's cache can be very useful when the material you want has been removed from a site. Perhaps something contentious, which would make a story libellous, has been

removed from the latest version of the site. If you type this in the search dialogue: [cache: www.subjectsite.com] (replacing the subject site with the URL of the site you are interested in) you'll see the version of the page that Google has in its cache. With luck the page before it was amended will be held here.

If you add to your search term the words you want to search for, by leaving a gap then adding them after the URL like so: [www.subjectsite.com victim], then those words will be highlighted within the cached document that is returned.

You can also get to the cache by performing a standard search and clicking on the cached link in the results returned.

### *Search for definitions (define:)*

If you want to check the usage of a word or phrase, put [define:] before your word or term and you'll get results that define it.

### *Search for stock prices (stocks:)*

If you begin your search term with [stocks:] and then follow with the ticker symbols rather than the company name, your returns will focus on stocks.

### *Search for all words in a site's title (allintitle:)*

Starting your query with this restricts your results to those with all of the query words in the title. For instance, [allintitle: garden ponds] will return only documents that have both "garden" and "ponds" in the title.

### *Search for all words in a URL (allinurl:)*

Starting your query with this restricts the results to those with all of the query words in the URL.

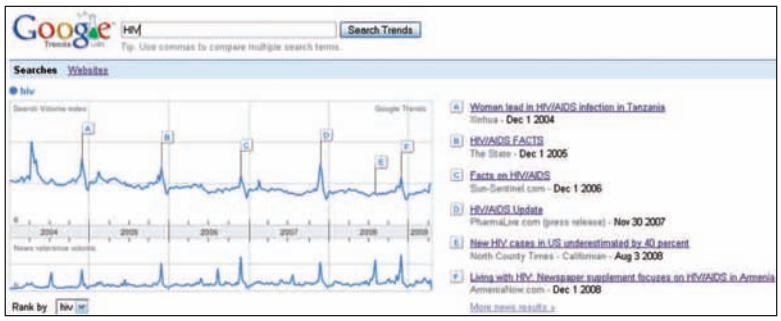
The search qualifiers [filetype:], [inurl:] and [intitle:] are very useful for constructing search strings that reach deep within sites.

### *Search for trends*

**http://www.google.com/trends**

This gives you results presented on a timeline, and this graph shows you how many times your search topic appeared in Google News stories. So you see peaks of interest. It also presents links to news stories, and indicates where on this graph they were written.

So, type in HIV and you get a graph of the peaks and troughs reflecting interest in the topic, and stories written at a number of points over that period.


Google
HIV
Search Trends
Searches
Websites
hiv
Women lead in HIV/AIDS infection in Tanzania
Xinhua - Dec 1 2004
HIV/AIDS FACTS
The State - Dec 1 2005
Facts on HIV/AIDS
Sun-Sentinel.com - Dec 1 2006
HIV/AIDS Update
PharmaLine.com (press release) - Nov 30 2007
New HIV cases in US underestimated by 40 percent
North County Times - Californian - Aug 3 2008
Living with HIV: Newspaper supplement focuses on HIV/AIDS in Armenia
ArmeniaNow.com - Dec 1 2008
More news results »
Rank by
hiv

*Search by category*

**http://directory.google.com/**

Your topic might be anything from crime to gardening, and returns will be from that category. This sort of search can be useful in identifying rich areas of useful information. It might be a magazine, maybe a university site, maybe a book. The next step is to refine your search using one of the other devices listed here, to get to the exact information you require.

*Search scholarly papers*

**http://scholar.google.co.uk/**

*Search university websites*

**http://www.google.co.uk/intl/en/options/universities.html**

*Search within books*

**http://books.google.com/**

*Google's limitations*

Google is justifiably the most popular search site, but the results it returns can be rather scattergun. It brings the most popular results, sure, but the categories they come from can be very wide. If you are researching a news story or feature, then you are likely to need

background, and Google isn't the best for that. So let's look at some alternatives that will help you focus your search faster.

## *Alternatives to Google*

### *Metasearch tools*

Metasearch tools search other search engines and aggregate their returns, categorising them to speed up the process of finding what you want. Here are some interesting ones.

#### CLUSTY

**http://clusty.com**

Clusty brings you general results in its main field, but it also has a very useful box top left that gives you returns grouped – or clustered – into key categories. Here's what a search for HIV has just returned me:

If I click on one of those clusters – **Women**, for example – I get returns organised under subdivisions of that cluster. **Women** gives me several subcategories, including **Pregnant women**.

Clusty can be useful if I am not sure what categories I need to search. Its returns alert me to areas where there are significant amounts of information and may alert me to important areas to research.

Those are just the top clusters; if I click on all clusters I get a much longer list.

#### KARTOO

**http://www.kartoo.com/**

Kartoo delivers search results on graphics that indicate how results relate to each other. It also allows you to choose from a range of linked topics that it generates alongside your search returns.

They are good at narrowing a search, but they may not find you the one result you need, however many times you refine your search terms.

You can focus your search by using Rollyo.

## Rollyo

**http://www.rollyo.com**

Rollyo enables you to, as they describe it, roll your own search engine. So you can set up searches – they call them **Searchrolls** – for a series of sites that you specify. So you could set up one search restricted to news sites that you need to check regularly. And if there is a group of other sites you like to check when, for instance, you are researching a story in a particular area – health, crime or whatever – you can set up a search that enables you to trawl all those sites swiftly.

You can go to either of those **Searchrolls** and type in a search term. It's a fast way of seeing who is saying what about a particular topic.

Rollyo gives an example of a search that Arianna Huffington of the *Huffington Post* has set up to track political blogs.

### SOOPLE

**http://www.soople.com**

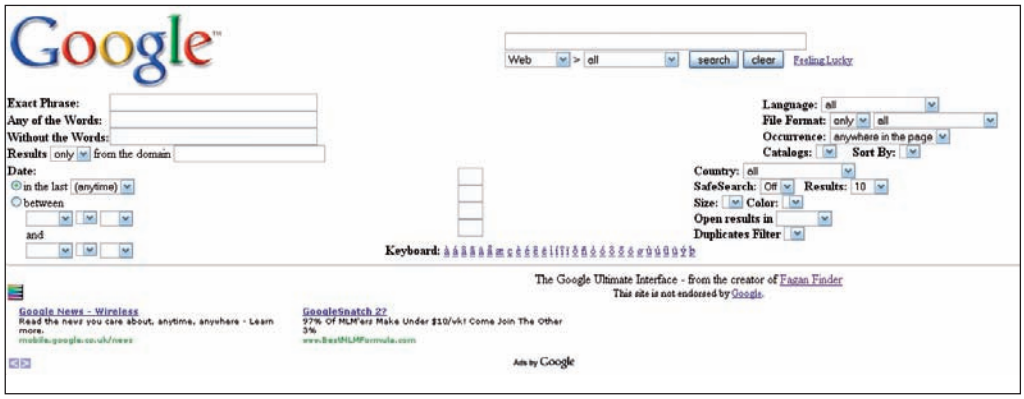
Soople offers a simple way to refine your Google search. As is explained on the site:

> **This site is meant for all those who are not yet familiar with all the possibilities of Google and all the required syntaxes. For instance, one can specify a search by one particular site or filetype (word, excel, powerpoint and pdf) or an imagesearch by size and type.**
>
> **Furthermore there are many useful tools Google offers; search in the latest news, look up definitions or use Google as a phonebook.**

### FAGANFINDER

**http://www.faganfinder.com**

Faganfinder enables you to refine your Google search in numerous ways from one interface. When you type in your search terms you can also specify exact words, any of the words, without the words, file format and where the terms appear in the page – in the title, text, URL, links or indeed anywhere. You can specify a URL you want to include or exclude, and control your search in several other ways.




## *How to make these filtering devices work for you*

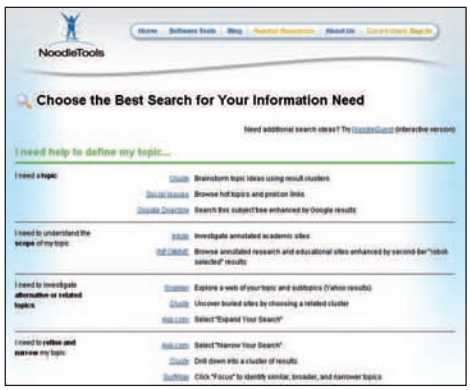
To use these filtering devices successfully, you need to have an idea of where the result you need is likely to be found. So you need to think what kind of site you will find it on, and what format the document is likely to follow. Will it be a published report in PDF format on a government site, for example?

For instance, if I am searching for official reports into deaths caused by MRSA infections in hospitals in Northern Ireland, I can search for: [inurl:MRSA deaths "Northern Ireland" filetype:pdf] and get straight to the official reports I need.

If you are uncertain how to go about this, Noodletools can help:

**http://www.noodletools.com/debbie/literacies/information/5locate/adviceengine.html**

Go to this site and it asks you a series of questions to determine what you are looking for.



It will ask if you need to search a topic, refine a topic, find alternative or related topics and a number of other refinements. Along the way it suggests search engines that will help you do what you require.

It will help you find authoritative or scholarly results, results ranked as valuable or relevant or from primary resources. It will help you search within a discipline – government, health, law – or by time: today, recent, historical or ancient.

## *Vertical search*

Broad search as practised by Google etc. is horizontal in that it spans the whole web. Vertical search concentrates on an area of the web and drills deep. Drilling deep is often what journalists need to do. Here are some vertical search engines that can help you with focused searches:

- **Business, economic and financial information**

  **http://www.alacra.com/**
  **http://biznar.com/biznar/**
  **http://www.economy.com/freelunch/default.asp**

- **Engineering, mathematics and computing**

  **http://www.techxtra.ac.uk/index.html**

- **Health**

  **http://health-search.closerlooksearch.com/**
  **http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez**

- **Law and technology**

  **http://www.llrx.com/**

- **Science**

  **http://www.science.gov/**
  **http://www.scienceresearch.com/search/**
  **http://www.scirus.com/srsapp/**

## *Searching the deep or invisible web*

By no means all information that is on the web can be crawled by search engines, which means that the result you are seeking might not be available through Google or another general search engine. There is an invisible, or deep, web: a vast repository of underlying content, such as documents in online databases. Deep web content is estimated to be 500 times as extensive as that of the surface web. To find these results you need to use an engine that can search these hidden databases. Here are some.

*Complete Planet*

**http://aip.completeplanet.com**

Gives you access to over 70,000 searchable databases and speciality search engines. Find databases with highly relevant documents that cannot be crawled or indexed by surface web search engines. You can refine your search by using topics, and subdivisions of those topics.

*Incy Wincy*

**http://www.incywincy.com/**

*Closer Look*

**http://www.closerlooksearch.com/index.aspx**

*Direct Search*

**http://www.freepint.com/gary/direct.htm**

*OAIster*

**http://www.oaister.org**

OAIster describes itself as a catalogue of digital resources, including digitised books and articles, audio files, images and video plus datasets – statistics – that cannot be accessed from conventional search engines.

## People search

*I92*

**http://www.192.com**

*Pipl*

**http://www.pipl.com/**

Pipl searches for people. As the site's blurb says: "Since most personal profiles, public records and other people-related documents are stored in databases and not on static web pages, most of the higher-quality information about people is simply invisible to a regular search engine."

*Melissa Data*

**http://www.melissadata.com/lookups/index.htm**

*Whois*

**http://www.whois.net**

Use this link to find out who owns a website.

## Research tools

*The Librarians' Internet Index*

**http://lii.org/**

## Academic research

These sites offer comprehensive, authoritative results for a wide range of subject searches.

*Academic Info*

**http://www.academicinfo.net/**

They say:

> Our in-depth directory is a round up of the best and most useful links and resources within a specific subject area. In most cases they list both printed reference works and electronic resources.
>
> The subject guides are also put together taking into account their accessibility, authoritative sources as well as their ease of use and aim to present a fair and well rounded perspective of the respective subject matter.

*Info Mine*

**http://infomine.ucr.edu/**

They say:

> a virtual library of Internet resources relevant to faculty, students, and research staff at the university level. It contains useful Internet resources such as databases, electronic journals, electronic books, bulletin boards, mailing lists, online library card catalogs, articles, directories of researchers, and many other types of information.

*HighWire Pres*

**http://highwire.stanford.edu/**

Use this site for searching academic journals.

*Intute*

**http://www.intute.ac.uk/**

Hand-selected web resources for education and research.

*Repository of Primary Sources*

**http://www.uiweb.uidaho.edu/special-collections/iil.htm**

They say: "A listing of over 5000 websites describing holdings of manuscripts, archives, rare books, historical photographs, and other primary sources."

*Ready, Net, Go*

**http://www.tulane.edu/~lmiller/ArchivesResources.html**

A comprehensive index of archive resources.

## *Searching the press*

*News Voyager*

**http://www.newsvoyager.com**

For identifying newspapers – from local to national and international.

Two resources for finding newspaper and magazine articles are:

*BNet*

**http://findarticles.com**

*Mag Portal*

**http://magportal.com/**

## *Finding your own material*

*Copernic Desktop Search*

**http://www.copernic.com**

We've all mislaid files on our computer, or trawled for an email we are sure we received but can't find. Copernic searches your hard drive: files, emails and email attachments, Word, Excel and PowerPoint documents, PDFs and multimedia.

12C5

## Exercises and projects

### Exercise 1

Find six features that have been inspired by news stories.

### Exercise 2

Look at how features are written in a particular B2B magazine.

### Exercise 3

Pick a news story from a B2B magazine and write a feature based on it. Use the points-in-order structure outlined above.

### Exercise 4

Find features written in these formats: diamond, hourglass, using geography as structure, using scenes as structure. Explore whether the content could be rearranged to fit one of the other formats.

### Exercise 5

Take a number of leader columns and identify how they draw on news stories or other items in that edition.

### Exercise 6

Develop your exam technique by getting past papers from your university department or external accrediting body and tackling them under exam conditions.

### Exercise 7

Look at a range of archives or special content areas. Using the benchmarks we established above, determine how effective they are, how well organised and how useful to the reader. Consider their structure and content.

### Projects

1 Write a feature inspired by a news story for your website.

2 Write a "Life in the Day" feature of someone of interest to the readers of your website.

3 Experiment with feature structures by writing features in each of these formats: diamond, hourglass, using geography as structure, using scenes as structure.

4 Write a leader column or editor's letter, following the guidance above, for your website.

5 Create an archive or special content area for your website. Select a topic using the criteria discussed above and ensure that it is comprehensive, accessible, useful and well structured.

### on the website

- If you want feedback on the exercises and projects you have worked on, send them to us for our assessment.

## Model answers for exercises in 12C2

### *Mock exam question 1: model answer*

**Cut-price electronic cars for Richmount motorists**

Richmount motorists are to be offered interest-free loans to buy cut-price electronic cars, in a dramatic green-motoring initiative from the council.

But council leader Simon Coles also announced a rise of up to 300 per cent in the charges levied on drivers of more polluting cars to park in residents' bays.

Cllr Coles said the deal, with the Birmingham-based manufacturer of the two-seater Milkfloat electric car, knocks £1,500 off the normal price of £6,995.

The moves follow last week's announcement of the results of a survey in which 72 per cent of residents supported plans to replace the £100 flat-rate annual parking

charge with a sliding scale, and 78 per cent said the threat of being charged extra to park outside their homes would make them consider changing to a less polluting model.

### What you will pay to park

The council issued a list of examples of charges, which are based on a car's $CO_2$ emissions.

- £0: Milkfloat and other electric cars, Honda Insight petrol-electric hybrid and Smart diesel
- £50: Toyota Prius, petrol Smart car, Citroën C1 and Peugeot 107
- £90: Ford Ka, Fiat Panda or Toyota Yaris
- £110: Mini One, Ford Fiesta, Peugeot 307 and Nissan Micra
- £150: petrol Ford Mondeo 1.8, Vauxhall Vectra 1.8,Toyota Avensis 1.8, diesel Maxda 5 2.0i, BMW 330d and Mercedes Benz C200
- £200: Nissan X-Trail, Land Rover Freelander and BMW 5 Series
- £300: Jaguar X type, Range Rover 4.4, Porsche 911 Carrera and Renault Espace.

Lars Kingstone, spokesman for manufacturers ElectroV, said he was delighted with the partnership, which is a first in Britain.

"This is great for us, a company just trying to make its way in the field of electronic motoring, and great for the residents of Richmount," he said.

ElectroV made air conditioning units until launching the Milkfloat, which can travel 60 miles between charges, last year.

## A 'stealth tax' on families

But the scheme is unlikely to gain the backing of all. Councillors in the opposition Freedom Party labelled the sliding-scale parking charges scheme a stealth tax when the results of the survey were announced.

Their leader, Councillor Sandi Stratford, said most families would have to pay more to park: "This is a huge stealth tax increase on local families. We are in favour of green taxes, but any increase in green tax should be matched with a corresponding reduction elsewhere."

She added that the consultation was a farce, with only 5 per cent of residents involved.

*External links*

- Richmount Council website
- Survey results, if available
- ElectroV and Milkfloat website
- Political parties.

## *Mock exam question 2: model answer*

### MPS and doctors demand alcohol price rises

Doctors, nurses and MPs have called for increases in alcohol prices, claiming health campaigns and legislation have failed to curb drink-fuelled antisocial behaviour.

The Home Affairs Select Committee said violence and disorder caused by excessive drinking of cheap alcohol is the biggest problem faced by police forces.

And in a survey of front-line medical staff carried out by the Royal College of Physicians and Royal College of Nursing, 84 per cent said public health campaigns did not work and 81 per cent thought people would drink less if the price went up.

The Royal College of Physicians wants to see alcohol priced by the unit, which would raise the cost of cheap but strong spirit-based drinks and ciders.

The Home Affairs Select Committee says legislation setting a minimum price on alcohol would be one possible solution for England and Wales.

In Scotland, new licensing laws include powers to fix alcohol prices to stop cut-price promotions and happy hours.

### Voluntary code 'flouted'

Committee chairman Keith Vaz said retailers must end a "pile it high, sell it cheap" culture around drink. He accused supermarkets of flouting the spirit of a voluntary code on alcohol sales.

Gavin Partington of the Wine and Spirit Trade Association said it was disappointed that doctors and nurses did not support government alcohol campaigns. "The Royal Colleges are wrong to suggest their health expertise qualifies them to comment on product pricing," he said.

"Alcohol consumption has been falling . . . and as ministers recently acknowledged it would be wrong to use minimum pricing to punish the majority."

## Below-cost selling is 'nonsense'

Chief Medical Officer Sir Liam Donaldson called for a minimum price in his last report, but the idea was rejected by the prime minister, who said the sensible majority of moderate drinkers should not have to pay for the excesses of the few.

Richard Dodd, of the British Retail Consortium, told BBC Breakfast that supermarkets were being unfairly demonised: "Supermarkets believe in responsible drinking too, and they do an enormous amount to achieve that, in terms of know-your-limits unit labelling and preventing underage purchases of alcohol, but there's an awful lot of nonsense talked about this idea of below-cost selling.

"No business could survive – let alone thrive – if it was routinely selling large amounts of product at less than it was actually paying for it."

*External links*

- Home Affairs Select Committee report
- Royal Colleges survey
- Sir Liam Donaldson's report
- Wine and Spirit Trade Association
- British Retail Consortium.

chapter thirteen

# *Sub-editing, search engine optimisation and proofreading*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

Here we will develop editing skills, for both online and print publications, to the standard required of a newly qualified journalist, including:

- Sub-editing news
- Headlining news
- Subbing features
- Headlining features
- Sub-editing and search engine optimisation
- Proofreading.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- Model answers to the exercises set in the book
- Subbing and headlining masterclasses.

Traditionally, in print journalism, sub-editing was a distinct, separate skill, conducted not by editors or by news and features writers but by a dedicated team of subs. That's often no longer the case.

The web began this change. Most online writers sub and headline their own copy, and see writing a head and sell as integral parts of their job in telling the story. In broadcasting, by contrast, there was never the same idea of the sub. Broadcasters had producers who were the fixers and arbiters of what went, but often a reporter put a radio or TV package together, including writing a script, without passing it to a sub-editor for checking.

As costs are cut, subs are disappearing, which at the very least means that, even if you aren't employed as a sub-editor, any multimedia journalist needs to be able to sub their own material to a high standard. You may also be called upon to sub the work of others. Many publications now combine responsibilities, with staff doing some reporting and some subbing.

That said, subbing as a distinct skill will probably survive in certain areas of the media. Indeed, in recent years, national newspapers and others have taken on trainee journalists as subs, and there are subbing qualifications that prepare students specifically for copy-editing. On tabloid newspapers, sub-editors often add huge value to the stories reporters write through the use of clever headlines. On glossy magazines, where production values are high, you need subs who can polish and refine the words and apply them to a complex layout.

So, with that confused, shifting picture in mind, let's look at how to be a good sub.

13C1

## How to approach subbing

If you have written a news story and now have to sub it, it is important that you see yourself in a new role. You must try to forget you wrote the piece. You need to try to be objective about it. Will the reader understand? Have I left any questions unanswered?

If you are subbing other people's copy, achieving that detachment is much easier.

Let's look at what is done to a piece of copy at the sub-editing stage, and the roles of the sub-editor.

### *Quality control*

This means ensuring that the story is accurate, well written, adheres to house style and is legally watertight. Here is a basic accuracy checklist:

- Spelling
- Numbers and arithmetic
- Locations/geography
- Names and titles
- Dates/time references
- Law
- House style.

We are not covering law in any great detail in this book, but legal considerations are vital when you sub.

The sub has two other roles:

## *Production role*

This involves ensuring that the story and all other elements fit the space allocated to them on the web or paper page, and that deadlines are met.

## *Selling the story*

This is achieved through the effective use of headlines, standfirsts, captions and other devices.

## *The sub's eye*

Reading copy like a sub is not like reading it as a reader. The sub reads in a strange way, looking for inconsistencies, developing an instinctive feel for when copy is not right in some way.

Subs develop a sort of survival mechanism when they read. Once you have delveloped what I call "the sub's eye", the essential checks you must make become automatic. You find yourself checking that a name in copy is consistently spelt throughout the piece and in any captions. If there are figures in a piece you instinctively check that, for instance, a list of percentages add up to 100, that if two dates are given and one is said to be 15 years later than the first, then that is the case. Figures that appear both in text and in a graphic are particularly troublesome. You must check carefully that they are consistent.

13C2

# Sub-editing news

## *How to approach subbing a piece of news copy*

Because the sub has a great deal to think about, they need to read copy more than once to make sure they have understood it and to make all the alterations that are required. Some subs will read a piece of copy five or six times before they have finished doing all they need to do to make it publishable. Each sub develops their own way of working, but they might follow a pattern something like this:

### *First read*

The sub reads at first for sense, without making many marks. Put yourself in the place of the reader coming to the copy fresh, and ask yourself:

- What's the story about?
- What's new about it?

Beware of old news, or an old angle at the top of a story that has fresh information further down.

### *Second read*

The purpose of this is to check the facts. If there is anything you are unsure about, you must look it up. Don't assume the reporter is correct. If you aren't sure of any aspect of the story – check it.

### *Third read*

This is to check the structure of the story. Does it flow? Are the paragraphs in the right order?

### *Fourth read*

This read is to tighten copy. Remove any unnecessary words or phrases, and cut the story to the number of words you have been given or, if you are subbing on computer, make it fit the space that has been given it on the page.

*Fifth read*

This is a final check to make sure you haven't missed anything.

It is possible, once you are a confident sub, to combine reads one, two and three, but four and five can't really be merged with any of the others. So, to my mind, subbing takes at least three reads of the copy, and more if you can possibly find the time for them.

## Exercises

In this chapter, the exercises appear right through the text, rather than at the end.

There is a lot for a sub to do. To help you make sure you have grasped each of the things a sub has to check with a piece of copy, we will divide them up, and give you a series of exercises that covers each point in turn.

**on the website**

- **Find model answers, with everything done to the raw copy that we feel it needs to make it publishable.**

## Checking for accuracy

First, let's look at correcting errors.

### Exercise 1

Here are three short pieces of copy. Go through them, and check for errors. They are extracts from longer stories, so don't worry for now about unexplained references to organisations or whatever. Just check for factual errors in each case.

If you are not sure whether names or places mentioned in them are correct, you will need to look them up. All the errors here can be corrected with the use of a dictionary, a basic encyclopaedia or general reference book or by searching on the internet. But when you check on the web, make sure you do so with a reliable site. An individual's or organisation's official site is always the best.

Check the following pieces of copy for errors in:

- spelling
- numbers and arithmetic
- locations/geography
- names and titles
- dates/time references.

1 A man who was washed out to see while trying to rescue his dog was saved by lifegards.

The man, who has not been named, was walking his dog on Bindi Beach, Sidney, Astralia, when the animal suddnly swam out to sea, chasign a seagull.

The man swam after his pet but, said rescuers, suffered an attack of cramp and went under the surface. Rescuers got alongside him and, grabign him round the waste, hauled him into their boat.

2 The Children's Aid charity said that 40 tonnes of aid had been flown to the airport on Tuesday, 33 tonnes was received on Monday, and 15 over the weekend – a total of 87 tonnes.

The agency said that health was improving. After the latest relief effort, only one in seven children was suffering from malnutrition, compared with one in 12 at this time last year.

3 George Warner Bush was re-elected president of the United States on November 2 2001. Both his supporters and opponents generally agree that his finest hour came when he showed powerful, decisive leadership after the attacks of September 11 2002.

## *Checking that the intro says what's new*

Now let's look at making sure the story has the latest angle in the intro. As you will probably have recognised by now, if you write a story well you have done a lot of the sub's job for them. Subbing is doing to other people's copy what you ought to do to your own, as you write it.

### Exercise 2

Take a look at the three short news stories below. Is the latest angle at the top? If it isn't, rewrite them so that it is.

**1** On Saturday Darfur rebels launched two attacks on the Sudanese capital, Khartoum.

Now Sudan's Islamist opposition leader Hassan al-Turabi has been arrested and accused of links to the rebels.

**2** Cyclone Nargis hit Burma on May 3, killing tens of thousands of people in the main rice-producing areas.

Rice prices had already hit all-time highs after some weak harvests. Rice prices have now risen for a sixth consecutive day as global supplies continue to be stretched by cyclone damage to crops in Burma.

**3** There have been many kidnappings of foreigners in Yemen in recent years. Two female Japanese tourists kidnapped by gunmen were just the latest.

They were seized as they visited Maarib, 176km (109 miles) east of the capital Sanaa.

Members of a tribe had seized the two to press for the release of a relative in government custody, a security official has said.

Other members of the tribe mediated the tourists' release, said the official. They had been held for less than a day.

## *Checking that the structure follows the inverted triangle*

### Exercise 3

Look at the three news stories below. Is the information in them in the right order? Put another way, does it fit the inverted triangle? If not, reorder it.

1 A former Kuwaiti detainee at the Guantanamo Bay detention centre was responsible for a suicide bombing in northern Iraq, according to the US military.

According to Kuwaiti media reports, Abdullah al-Ajmi and his two alleged accomplices, Nasir al-Dawsari and Badr al-Harbi, were able to leave Kuwait a month ago without alerting the attention of the authorities because they had wrongly been issued new passports.

They then travelled to Syria, where Ajmi is reported to have told his family of his intentions, before heading onto Iraq.

The families of Ajmi and Harbi reportedly later received anonymous calls informing them that the men had died in Iraq.

The US transferred Ajmi to Kuwaiti custody from Guantanamo Bay in 2005.

He was later acquitted by a Kuwaiti court of terrorism charges.

Ajmi and two other Kuwaitis blew up two explosive-packed vehicles next to Iraqi security forces, media reports say.

A spokesman for US Central Command told the Associated Press that Abdullah al-Ajmi took part in an attack in Mosul on April 29 that killed several people.

2 James Naylor, from Islington, London, admitted that his Nissan Micra was not taxed, but said it didn't need to be because it was parked on his drive with only part of a rear wheel poking out on to the pavement.

Mr Naylor said he had planned to restore the car, but had not got round to it.

"I had decided to get rid of it, but then I came home from work the other day and it had been clamped," he said. "I don't know why they bothered – it doesn't go."

So he cut his car in half with a chain saw in protest.

The 30-year-old chef said the car was going to be scrapped anyway, but he wanted to make a point.

A spokesman for NCP Services, which has the contract to clamp untaxed vehicles from Mr Naylor's local council, said half of the car was parked on the road and therefore should have been taxed.

**3** Two-thirds of all HIV infections occur in Africa.

Yet researchers say that there is very little evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of many of the prevention strategies used in the continent.

The multi-million dollar spending on promoting the use of condoms, HIV testing and vaccine research has had limited success in Africa, argue the researchers from Harvard University School of Public Health in the journal Science.

They say male circumcision and cutting the number of sexual partners should become the "cornerstone" of prevention.

They conclude that millions of dollars that are being spent to prevent the spread of HIV are being wasted on strategies that do very little good, according to American researchers who call for a "dramatic shift" in priorities.

## *Tightening copy*

Now let's concentrate on tightening copy. Remove any unnecessary words or phrases in the exercise below. The number of words you should be able to save is marked at the end of each extract. You should be able to cut the copy by this number of words just by tightening – there is no need to remove any information.

## Exercise 4

1 Eminent researchers in the United States of America announce that they have found a significant new way to put to death a wide range of unwanted plants and of animals that have been known to hitch a ride in the ballast waters of cargo tankers.

It is postulated by the United Nations that a range of "invasive species" are often carried in the ballast water that is picked up by a ship in one part of the world and that is then finally pumped out in another part of the world and that this represents one of the four main threats that are faced by the world's marine ecosystems.

Tests, say the researchers, have shown that a continuous blast of microwaves in the tanks can and will remove all forms of marine life.

More than 80 per cent of the world's commodities are moved by ship and, as a by-product of this process, up to five billion tonnes of ballast water is transported internationally each year, this according to the UN.

The explanation of the process is this. When a ship's cargo is finally unloaded, the ship takes on ballast water in order to provide improved stability. When the same ship is ready to take on another load, often by this time on the other side of the world, this taken-on ballast water is then discharged.

The findings from this study will appear in the journal Environmental Science and Technology.

Cut the above from 239 words to between 150 and 155.

2 It is estimated by authoritative sources that at least 8,500 persons have been fatally wounded by an extremely powerful earthquake that has shaken China's south-western province of Sichuan.

It is also suspected that many more people have been killed and injured elsewhere in the country during and in the aftermath of the quake, which

experts estimate measured 7.8 on the Richter Scale, and which struck at 2.30pm in the afternoon.

It is also estimated that at least 60 bodies of earthquake victims have been recovered from the wreckage, debris and rubble of a children's school where it is believed that in the order of 900 students were buried alive.

China's President, Hu Jintao, has made a solemn pledge that there will be an all-out effort to rescue the victims of this earthquake.

The epicentre of the earthquake was said to be around about 92km distance from Chengdu, which is Sichuan's provincial capital.

Because of the fact that the earthquake has struck in the middle of the day, it is feared that many schoolchildren, who were at school at the time, may well be among the very many victims.

Cut from 187 words to between 110 and 115.

**3** The introduction of face-recognition technology that is said to be capable of preventing underage smokers from buying cigarettes from vending machines is set to deter the illegal purchase of tobacco products in Japan, and is being developed by a Japanese company.

The Fujitaka company is in the process of installing cameras in cigarette vending machines that are capable of counting the wrinkles and the skin sags of a would-be purchaser in order to check that smoker's age.

New Japanese government legislation to be introduced in July will mean that, from this date, the owners of vending machines could be faced with prosecution if they sell tobacco to anyone who is under the legal tobacco-product purchase limit of 20 years of age.

Should they fail this test, would-be smokers who fail the digital camera age test will have to show the machine an ID card in order to establish the fact that they are legally allowed to smoke.

The system works by comparing the facial characteristics of the prospective tobacco purchaser, including bone structure, sags and crow's feet

around the eyes, against a database record that it holds of more than 100,000 people. It does so in order to estimate the age of a purchaser.

A spokesman for the Fujitaka company, Hajime Yamamoto, told the Reuters news agency that: "With face recognition, so long as you've got some change and you are an adult, you can buy cigarettes as before."

Cut from 239 words to between 140 and 145.

## *Bringing it all together*

The following exercise contains all or some of the faults we have been working on one by one above. Do whatever you need to and cut the extracts to the length indicated.

### Exercise 5

1 Latin was always been the languidge of the Roman Catholics Church, but during what was the last half of the twentieth century it had was been fall rapidly out of favour.

That was until the arrival of Pope Benedict XIV, an advocate of Latin, in 2005.

Now a website that has been designed in order to give a much-needed soem woudl say boost to the ancient language has been lunched by the Roman Catholic Church.

For many centuries going back in time church documents were allways written in Latin, and the mass was said only in Latin as well.

Without his having a knowledge of the language of Latin one would not go very far at all if you were an ambitious priest.

The introduction of the Latin site – part of the extensive Vatican website – is part of teh pope's campaign to make the ancient but noble language more popular in the twenty-first century.

The section of the site that is in Latin, which is called Sancta Sedes (Holy See), contains a range of Latin papal texts and religious works. The Vatican website has already has sections that are in English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.

Latin has been falling out of favour in schools as well as the Church. The subject has been dropped from curricula in many countries and everyday Vatican business is conducted in either Italian or English.

The Latin Mass had been largely abandoned in the 1960s, as part of reforms to make Catholicism more relevant to its worldwide congregation.

But Pope Benedict wants the Catholic Church to keep its ancient traditions.

On his election to the papacy he addressed the Church's cardinals in Latin.

He has encouraged the use of the language in seminaries, where new priests are trained, and he has lifted restrictions on celebrating the Latin Tridentine Mass.

The new website will make sacred texts available in Latin.

Cut from 316 words to beween 220 and 230.

**2** It has no air conditioning, no electric windows and no power steering, but it only costs £1,500, but two deluxe models will be on offer.

One of the world's biggest motor companies, Renault-Nissan, has announced that it is entered a joint venture with the Indian motorbike manufacturer Bajaj to produce the vehicle, which will be aimed largely at the Indian market.

The car, so far known only as Codename ULC will cost roughly the same as another Indian cut-price vehicle – Tata Motors' Nano – which it claims is the world's cheapest car.

The Nano is a great advance for many people in India because it is now making it a realistic prospect for many people to afford to buy a car.who had previously not been able.

The Naon is a for-door five-seater car, and it goes on sale later this year, having a 33bhp, 624cc, engine that is mounted at the rear.

The naon  has no air conditoning, no electrical windows and it also has know power steering, but two deluxe models will be on offer.

India's domestic sales of cars are predicted to be booming in coming years as a side effect benefit of the country's fast-growing economy and increased consumer spendign power.

sales of cars in India are predicted to more than four-fold increase to $145bn by the 2016. No details of the new car have been released, though production is expected to begin in 2011.

Bajaj, the second-biggest maker of motorbikes in India, will manufacture 400,000 a year in a factory in Chakan, Maharashtra state, in the west of the country.

Cut from 265 words to between 110 and 120.

3 Over six million of the children who are dying each and every year could have their lives saved if they were in receipt of basic health services, according to a new report by the children's charity Save the Children.

Save the Children carries out an annual survey of health care provision for the under fives in developing countries.

Jasmine Whitbread, Saving the Children's chief executive, said: "A child's chance of reaching its fifth birthday should not depend on the country or community where it is born.

"We need to do a better job of reaching the poorest children with basic health measures like vaccines, antibiotics and skilled care at childbirth."

In its latest report, just out and released to the press and broadcasters at a press conference today, it found the Philippines was performing best of

all, with almost 69 per cent of children in that country being able to get health care.

In India and Ghana, on the other hand and in contrast, less than half of young chdilren under five years of age get the care they need.

Ethiopia ranks last – only 16 per cent of children under five get health care when they need it.

The report, called State of the World's Mothers, says that over 60 per cent of the 10 million children who die each year would live with basic health services provided by a health facility or community health worker.

Cut from 237 words to between 180 and 190.

13C3

## Headlining news

Now we come to the third of the sub's roles: selling. The headline a sub writes on a story is there to sell that story.

Bad headlines leave stories unsold and unread. Good headlines get the reader to begin reading the story. After that, the headline has done its job, and it is up to how good the story is, and how well it is written, whether the reader sticks with it.

So what makes a good headline? The key question to ask of a headline is: would it make me read the story? If it would, then it has served its purpose. But let's look at what makes a good headline in a bit more detail.

News headlines have a treble function:

- They attract the reader's attention
- They give the gist of the story
- They help order information on the page.

We are going to concentrate on the first two functions in this section. The third is more about the use of different type sizes to indicate the relative importance of stories on a page.

## *How to approach news headline writing*

### *Building block 1*

There will be some information that you must have in a headline.

Identify two or three key words that are essential to explaining the story to the reader. This is your first building block for the headline. If you only have a very tight space available, this element should stand alone as the minimum necessary to introduce the story.

Let's take an example.

Let's say you have a story about the Brighton Bomber – the IRA man who planted a bomb in the Grand Hotel at Brighton in an attempt to kill Margaret Thatcher and her cabinet.

It's the 25th anniversary of that attack and the perpetrator is to return to Brighton for a meeting with some of the survivors and the relatives of victims. The organisers are calling it a reconciliation meeting, a healing of the wounds, but there is substantial opposition in the town to the visit. Those who oppose the meeting say that the bomber has never expressed remorse for the attack. You have very strong quotes from Norman Tebbit, whose wife was paralysed in the attack, condemning the bomber.

**questions**

If I said you only have three words to headline that story, what would they be? Don't read on until you have decided.

My suggestion is: Brighton bomber returns.

In suggesting this I am assuming that my readers know the story of the Brighton bombing, and by saying "returns" it is obvious that he is returning to Brighton, not somewhere else.

So, "Brighton bomber returns" gives us our basic headline. It contains key words that tell the story as succinctly as possible. But very often we have headline space for more than three words. If we do, we can build on that nub headline.

### *Building block 2*

Look at ways in which to add to the basic headline idea you have so as to complete the thought. Good headlines flow, they are a complete thought.

## questions

How would you make the Brighton bomber headline a complete thought, using three or four extra words? Don't read on until you have decided what to do.

If we add to the end of the current headline an explanation of why the bomber is returning, that would fit the bill. We could say:

**Brighton bomber returns for reconciliation meeting**

or:

**to face victims**

or:

**to 'heal the wounds'**

So now we have a headline that tells the story, but there is more we can do if we have the space.

*Building block 3*

Make the headline active. Try to introduce a dynamic element to it. This element might be emotion such as anger or rage. It might be about fears or dangers.

## questions

Can you add two words to the start of your bomber headline to add this third element?

There is certainly anger at the bomber's visit, so we might write:

**Fury as Brighton bomber returns to "heal the wounds"**

*Building block 4*

There is a fourth thing we can sometimes do to a headline to make it more interesting. Look for opportunities to use your imagination, to pick on detail, a word or a turn of phrase that makes the story more interesting.

You can't always do this, just as you can't always do point 3. If you are writing headlines for a B2B magazine you are unlikely to get beyond points 1 and 2 very often.

But if there is an opportunity, you should use it. We don't really need to with our bomber headline, but let me tell you another story. This one is about Network Rail. The story is that several senior managers are to get substantial performance bonuses, totalling £1 million, despite the fact that the late running of trains has not been reduced. So we can gather our key words, which will include bonuses, late trains and could include a phrase such as rail bosses. If we took these elements we could write:

**£1m bonuses for rail bosses but trains still run late**

But let's say that somewhere in the news story the bosses are described as fat controllers. That's the sort of phrase that can add life to a headline:

**£1m bonuses for 'fat controllers', but trains still run late**

Notice the use of single quote marks around certain words in headlines. We use them – never double quotes – to indicate that it is not us saying this.

So, in this instance, we have covered points 1, 2 and 4 in our headline. We haven't included 3, because the story didn't have any reaction from unions or passengers. If it did, then we'd have an opportunity to tack something of this reaction on to the headline, perhaps at the start once again.

## *Here are some other things we should bear in mind when we headline a story*

### *Headlines should say what has happened*

Headlines should say what is happening or has happened. Headlines which say what has not happened are generally dull and a turn off.

**No news on missing sailors**

is a turn off.

**Fears grow for missing sailors**

is better.

### *Put the most important element first*

**Cameron tells Brown**
**'call the election now'**

is not as good as

**'Call the election now'**
**Cameron tells Brown**

**Swedish knee surgery brings warning to hundreds**

is not as good as

**Warning to hundreds after Swedish knee surgery**

### *Use short, concrete words*

Headline words are short, direct and concrete because they have to get the reader's attention – and fit the available space. Subs learn all sorts of short alternatives to longer, more abstract words:

- "Bid" for "attempt"
- "Cut" for "reduce".

Harold Evans, in his brilliant *Essential English: For Journalists, Editors and Writers* (2nd edn, 2000) gives a list of hundreds of them. For example:

- Instead of bankruptcy, he suggests: collapse, crash, failure, fall
- Instead of assistance, he suggests: aid, back-up, help, relief, rescue.

### *Keep punctuation to a minimum*

We use less punctuation in headlines than we do in text. If a headline needs punctuating, it's probably not a good headline. The odd comma or colon is okay, but keep them to a minimum.

British headline style is either all caps or upper and lower case with caps only for initial words and names. In America they tend to use initial capitals in all major words in a headline.

Quote marks in headlines are always single, and used to distance the publication from the words spoken or the opinion given.

### *Headline clichés*

The publication you get a job on will have its own views on this, but as a general rule don't use words we don't use in normal speech, so avoid the following:

- 'Caged' for 'jailed'
- 'Boost' for 'improve'
- 'Rapped' for 'criticised'.

Phrases from popular culture and common current usage are fine but they should not be overused. The catchphrases of comedians and others often find their way into headlines.

When I was a features sub on the *Daily Mail* they had us aim for a clever play on words in our headline writing. That meant that clichés were out because they were dull and predictable. A pun was okay as long as it was a clever one.

Here's an example of this technique in action.

A company has invented a new kind of office chair. It is highly sophisticated, and shaped rather like a cocoon, enclosing the sitter's torso, arms and head. It provides excellent lumbar support and, if the worker feels like a quick nap, it can be tilted back to the horizontal.

The headline on this story was: "The shut-eye pod".

### *Don't use the same word in more than one headline*

An important convention in headline writing is not to repeat key words in headline, standfirst, strapline and elsewhere on the same page or, for some publications, on a two-page spread. This can be a challenge on a specialist title. If you are writing for nurses, then the word "nurse" will suggest itself for pretty much every headline. If you write for publicans, then "pub" and "landlord" will have to be severely rationed in your headings.

### *A good shape for a headline*

Headlines should be a pleasing shape. Some titles insist that all lines in a headline should be full out – meaning that there is no white space caused by short lines. Generally, you are allowed some short lines. But if a line is too short the resulting white space can attract the eye when it shouldn't. So, one-line headlines – lines are often called "decks" in headlining – should be as full out as possible. With a headline of more than one line, the top line should be reasonably full out and the second line shorter. The top line should never be shorter than any of the lines that follow it.

With a three-deck headline, the top line should be the longest, the middle line can be short but the final line should be almost as long as the top line.

Headlines are either centred, or set left, depending on your house style.

Here's how some different shapes look:

This is a
very ugly shape

This is a much
better shape

With three lines
you need a
shape like this

This shape
for a headline
just looks very odd

## Exercise 6

Write headlines for the three stories you subbed in Exercise 5.

In each case, you have three decks of headline, and can use up to 10 characters in each line. When gauging the length of a headline using characters, we count most letters as being one character wide. Narrow letters – i, j, l, t – count as half a character. Long letters – m, w – count as 1.5 characters. Most capitals are 1.5 characters, but M and W are 2. A space between words counts as half a character.

**on the website**

- Find some headlines from us.

13C4

## Subbing features

In many important ways, subbing a feature is the same as subbing a news story. All the basic checks on accuracy still apply. It is still important to tighten copy and to structure it correctly. But there are differences. The differences have to do with the differences in writing a feature as opposed to a news story. There are some essentials we must bear in mind.

First, features often don't have an intro that goes to the key point. They often have a scene-setting section at the start, with the key point coming a few paragraphs later.

Second, the ending of a feature is more important than the ending of a news story. We do not use the inverted triangle, often, with a feature, so the ending cannot be automatically removed without damaging the structure of the piece.

Because there is more leeway in how a feature is subbed, there is more room for error. Writing a new, newsy intro, cutting the ending and removing all sense of the writer's voice – just as you might in subbing a news story – will probably ruin a feature.

That's not to say you can't tighten copy, remove elements that slow it down and reorder things if they make the feature work better.

Because there is so much more leeway with features subbing, a sub needs a clear brief from the features editor, or to have developed a full understanding of how features are written on a particular publication.

13C5

## Headlining features

Just as there are differences in the way we sub a feature as opposed to a news story, there are also different techniques we use when headlining a feature for a print publication.

With news we have to give the gist of the story. That involves getting at the essentials of the news the story covers, picking key words to get that across, and writing a headline that is as interesting as it can be.

With features in newspapers and magazines, we still want to interest the reader in the article, but we don't have to be as straightforward in the methods we use to get them interested.

While a news headline is clear, direct and specific, a features headline can be more oblique. It doesn't have to give the gist of the story. It just has to grab the reader's attention. It can be designed to intrigue; to puzzle the reader even.

Often, features headlines are twinned with a strapline – a second headline in smaller type that tells the reader more. With this combination of selling devices, the headline can be used purely as a hook, while the strapline explains the headline and tells the reader more. The headline arouses the reader's curiosity, the strapline expands on the headline and gives the reader more reasons to go ahead and look at the article.

Another common selling device on a feature is what is known as a standfirst. A standfirst is longer than a strapline – often it can contain 20 words or so – and in a type size that is closer to that of the article itself. Standfirsts are often in 14pt or 12pt, while articles are set in 9pt or 10pt. In a standfirst there is plenty of room to explain the headline, give the reader some highlights from the article and include the by-line of the writer.

We don't always use this oblique approach with features. Sometimes they have very direct headlines. If you have an interview with a famous person talking for the first time about, for example, their drug addiction or their divorce or some other powerful subject, the headline could be very simple and direct: "My drug hell" or "Why my marriage failed".

When you have a strong, newsy feature a straightforward headline is often best.

13C6

## Subbing and search engine optimisation

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is about maximising the chances of your story being found by potential readers who are looking on Google or another search engine for stories on a particular topic.

To understand this, think of how you find things on Google. You type in search terms. The results you get are for files – news stories, in the context of this discussion – that fit your search terms as closely as possible.

So, to get good at search engine optimisation, we have to know how the engines work.

We also have to think what a reader who is seeking a story we have published online would type into a search engine in order to find it. We also need to think about readers who might be interested in the subject, but haven't heard of the story we have or of the events that we are writing about.

Search engines "spider" your site to index its contents. They look for key words, words that give a clear indication of what the content of each item you publish is. The spider expects to find these key words in several key, prominent places. The ones we, as online subs and writers, need to think about are:

- In headings – and particularly at the start of headings
- In your sell – the first paragraph of your body text

- In hypertext links
- In side headings.

Search engines expect to find the important words that define the scope of your story in these places.

Some people try to boost their rankings by stuffing key words into these places. Not only is that repetitive and boring for the reader, it can also be counterproductive. Search engines expect to find a key-word density of about 1.5–2 per cent of total words. Any more and they begin to think you are trying to cheat.

Clearly, then, heads and other important areas of stories need to contain key words that define the scope of a story. If they don't, then the search engines won't know what the story is about and won't be able to deliver it to the searchers you want to reach.

Here's an example of a failure of SEO. The *Guardian* had an exclusive piece of video, posted on its website, that showed the violent arrest of a young woman outside a Sheffield nightclub in the early hours. The arrest, in which four police officers sought to restrain her and in which punches and kicks were thrown, was caught on CCTV.

The *Guardian* newspaper story, reproduced on the website, had this headline:

**Four men, five punches and a boot: A 19-year-old woman is arrested**

There were two bulleted subheadings:

- Guardian obtains footage of Sheffield police incident
- PC who dealt blows says he acted in self-defence.

The story didn't do well in Google and other rankings because it didn't contain the appropriate key words. It didn't have "CCTV" for one thing. A better headline would have been something like this:

**Police accused of brutality after officer beat woman during arrest at nightclub**

Here's another example, this time from the *Wall Street Journal*. It had a story on the free access area of its otherwise subscription website about a coffee-shop chain called Green

Beans, which has outlets on US military bases overseas, opening its first café in the US for the general public. The headline was:

**Green Beans Comes Marching Home**

The problem with that headline, in web terms, is that it takes a human to interpret it. Search engine spiders simply aren't smart enough to know what the story is about from that headline.

As a consequence, the *Wall Street Journal* fell behind the Google rankings, beaten by, among others, a blogger who reproduced the story word for word but put better tags on it.

Also, if we are thinking about finding readers who are interested in coffee shops and coffee but don't know about this story, we are not going to reach them. In fact there is a more interesting way of telling the story. It is that Green Beans is planning to take on Starbucks. Few searchers will be looking specifically for Green Beans, but a lot will be searching for Starbucks for a variety of reasons, and for coffee and cafés.

So, a better headline would read something like:

**US military coffee chain takes on Starbucks with cafés stateside**

In fact there is nothing particularly new about writing headlines with SEO in mind. But, just as with the way we write for the web, we are required to sharpen the skills we use for print.

And we have to recognise that clever, punning or oblique headlines that might be great in print don't work on the web.

The headline writing style I've described above is actually entirely appropriate for web headlines and for those in print, but the features approach will not work online. On the web, features headlines need to be like news ones and contain appropriate key words.

The fact that most media websites get a large proportion of their traffic through search engines changes something really fundamental that print journalists have always held dear. With print, getting on the front page was a coup. It guaranteed you lots of readers. But if, say, 60 per cent or more of your users find you through search engines, your front page – or home page in net terms – becomes an irrelevance to that portion of your readers.

Take a look at the highest ranking stories on any newspaper website and you'll usually find the ranking is very different to that which was given to stories in the print edition. The front-page lead is rarely the most-read story online. That means being on the front page, or on the

home page, is much less important than we might think. What is important is that the right key words are used in the right places to maximise the audience for a particular story.

The search terms readers use to find you are valuable in another way. They give you an insight into their interests and concerns. You learn about the angles they are interested in on particular news topics.

**on the website**

- Find links to further aids to understanding and improving SEO, including:
- Using Google Adwords to suggest key words
- Using Google Insight to compare how often alternative key words are appearing in relevant searches
- Taking an online SEO tutorial.

13C7

## Proofreading

Proofreading is the final check that a sub-editor makes before a page in a magazine or newspaper is printed. Web pages should also be proofed, but they often aren't because of time pressures.

Sounds simple? Well it's actually very hard to proofread effectively and catch all the mistakes that might have crept into a piece of copy. By the time we have finished subbing a story, we have become very familiar with it, and familiarity makes it harder to spot errors. What happens is that we tend to see – and read – what we meant to say, rather than what is actually on the page.

That gets even harder if we are proofing copy we wrote ourselves. So you must break the familiarity the copy now has for you. You need to use a range of techniques to ensure that you do not read what you thought was there – what you meant to put there – but what is actually there.

Not only that, but our eyes can deceive us when we are reading. To show what we mean, read the following sentence once and count up the number of fs in it:

**Finished files are the result of years of scientific study combined with the experience of years.**

How many do you make it? Three? Four? Five? Six?

Actually it is six, but most people see three the first time they read, then four or five, and eventually six. The problem is the fs in "of". Perhaps because we pronounce this word "ov" it seems hard for us to spot that there are fs involved.

So we have to be very careful as we proofread, and concentrate hard to try to stop our eyes deceiving us.

We should also be very clearly aware of the difference between proofreading and subbing. Most of, if not all, the errors in a piece of copy should have been spotted at the sub-editing stage. When we proof, we must resist the temptation to improve copy in anything other than essential ways. We aren't subbing, we are only spotting errors that must be corrected, and doing so in a way that causes the minimum of work on the copy.

## *It is very hard to proofread effectively on a computer screen*

You need to have the document in a form in which you can see all of it at once. Seeing the material in a new form – printing it out – often brings errors to light that you had become blind to onscreen.

You must try to distance yourself from a story you have written, edited or sub-edited yourself. Whenever possible, put the copy to one side after you have subbed it so that it is less familiar when you come to proofread it.

One key thing about proofing – you can't rush it and expect to get it right. Accuracy is paramount, speed comes second.

Here are some tips.

### *Place a straight edge beneath the line you are reading*

That makes sure you don't lose your place – and possibly miss an error.

### *Read out loud*

By saying the words as well as reading them, we increase our chances of spotting errors.

### *Read backwards*

This forces you to look at each word and helps you pick out spelling errors, repetitions and other errors at word level. When we read forward we can't help getting caught up in the sense of the sentence, and that can make us miss small errors – our brain ignores them for us! Reading backwards forces us to look at each word individually.

### *Share the task*

If you can, get a colleague to follow the text while you read it out loud.

### *Rest your eyes*

Take a break for 30 seconds every 10–15 minutes. Take breaks of 10 minutes each hour when you proofread for long periods.

## *Here are common types of error that we must learn to spot*

### *Spelling errors*

You need a dictionary – either in paper or online form – with you at all times as you write, sub-edit and proofread. A lot of people rely on Spellcheck, but it can let you down. You might have used a word that exists but which is not the right word for the context. Spellcheck can't spot that. For example:

Analysts pour over statistics.
It should be **pore** over statistics.

The very young often enjoy read-allowed books.
It should be **read-aloud** books.

### *Transpositions in words or sentences*

This means spotting when the order of the letters or words has got switched around.

- gettnig instead of getting
- acocommodation instead of accommodation.

### *Repetitions of words*

These are particularly hard to spot when the repeated word appears once at the end of a line and then at the start of the next line:

**He could see that the water
water was coming in under
the door.**

### *Punctuation missing, or incorrectly used*

For example:

**So what the terrestrial television companies offer in terms of advertising slot the 30-second television spot is becoming outmoded and replaced.**

We need a pair of commas:

**So what the terrestrial television companies offer in terms of advertising slot, the 30-second television spot, is becoming outmoded and replaced.**

### *Facts that contradict each other within an article*

For example, a person's age may be given as 28 in the news story, but as 26 in the caption to their picture.

We need to check each mention of a fact such as a name or a place, a date or a figure, to make sure that they do not conflict. If they do, we have to find out which version is correct.

## Projects

1 If you are working in a team, set up a subbing system in which each person subs the copy of another member. Use the techniques outlined in this chapter to check and improve copy, and discuss your queries and the changes you made with the person who wrote it.

2 Practise writing headlines for your own and other people's copy. Have several people come up with a headline for a given piece of text and compare what they produce. Decide whose is best, and why.

3 Using the guidance above and the tools linked to on the website, assess how effective SEO is on your website and/or blog.

4 Apply the proofing techniques outlined here to material on your website before you publish it.

## on the website

- Watch subbing and headlining masterclasses.

chapter fourteen

# *Publishing platforms for advanced multimedia storytelling*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

- Using software that enables us to create multimedia stories and packages very simply
- Geotagging content to a location
- Hyper-local – what it is and how it works
- How journalists can create hyper-local content
- Obtaining hyper-local content from readers
- Using maps as the basis of multimedia storytelling
- Creating multimedia mashups with the use of Google Maps, Apture and other free software
- Live geo-broadcasting.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- Further examples of hyper-local content
- Masterclasses on multimedia storytelling.

14C1

## Hyper-local reporting and geotagging

We've talked a great deal about the World Wide Web in this book. Indeed, that is what a lot of what we do is about. But it's also about the local. And that web, which can be seen anywhere, can also bring us a huge amount of information about each specific locality.

We can drill deep into an area and present a huge amount of information relevant to the people who live, work or play there. And we can combine the product of professional journalists with that of students, bloggers, citizen journalists and residents.

In this we are doing – as I say elsewhere – what local papers used to do when they focused on really covering an area, but at a level of detail that not even the fattest print publication could manage. Our local web can have every name, every home, every shop, every planning application, crime statistic, broken paving slab, tree preservation order, dispersal order, ASBO and anything else we care to include.

The software that enables all this material to be brought together and catalogued is still being developed. The US is ahead in this and, at the time of writing – December 2009 – in the UK its use is still only in its infancy. But many publications – local and national, from established publishers to gung-ho start-ups – are aware of the power of this web of local information and are working on ways to exploit it.

**on the website**

- **This is a fast-moving subject, and you should check the website for updates on progress.**

So let's look in more detail at what the technology that allows this is, and how we can use it. There are three technologies that make hyper-local journalism possible. They are:

- Searchability (geotagging or geocoding and key words added by the journalist or search engine)
- GPS positioning of the journalist and the reader
- Personalisation – readers choosing locations they would like to hear about, through either text or multimedia reporting.

## on the website

- Find a Paul Bradshaw video on this:

  **http://seesmic.com/video/OI8hESLO6r**

Perhaps we should define geotagging or geocoding – the terms are interchangeable – before we go any further.

What they mean is that any information can be sorted geographically, down to a very local level where required. The information we create – the stories we write, record or film – have a location attached to them that a computer can understand. We tag a postcode or a longitude and latitude point to an article.

When we do that, readers can decide what locations interest them and go to those geocoded items. They can also create their own, highly focused websites about the communities they care about. A reader puts in the locations that interest them and stories about those places are delivered. Those places could be incredibly diverse, and requested in a combination that fits one reader alone.

From the publisher's perspective, it takes putting a local paper together out of their hands. As long as you are creating content with a wide range of local relevancies – and any one story might have several – you can leave it up to the reader, using the technology now available, to put together exactly the local paper they want.

The same principle applies to B2B sites. If I am a teacher, say, and I want to see education-related content from professional and citizen journalists solely relevant to Blackburn, that can be done. Any B2B site can allow a reader to select news from the region that particularly interests them.

In fact, perhaps it's best to think not just about geographic locations but also about networks as we develop our publishing platforms.

We all have networks – some of them are related to places we live, were born, work or go to on holiday. Others are about our friends, our colleagues and other groups we have an interest in. With a combination of geotagging and more general personalisation, our readers can make sure they get exactly the feeds of information they want.

Geotagging is being used in various ways. Some publishers are creating hyper-local sites. Others are tagging information in such a way that it can be searched for very specific areas.

Local newspapers are geotagging content with postcodes, so a reader can find news through a postcode search that is local to them. They do that by getting journalists to record the locations referred to in each story they write and adding the relevant postcodes as metadata when they upload their copy to the web. It is also possible to geotag material automatically, with the use of a GPS device.

Users can prioritise content that has been geotagged online according to postcodes. Geotagged content can also be displayed on maps. That means if, say, you are covering a weather story and you have a lot of reports from specific places – it might be all over the country or around one town – you can geotag them to locations. And if you invite UGC you can identify on the map where submitted stills, video and other content were created, or what specific area they relate to. In that way we can get geocoded content from our readers and add it to our coverage.

Let's look at some examples, and then see how we might apply them in the websites and blogs that we create.

## *Everyblock*

Everyblock describes itself as an experiment in aggregating news at the block level in selected cities. At the time of writing the site covers Chicago, New York City and San Francisco. You can view news for any address in the city.

Everyblock aggregates three broad types of news:

- Public records, including crimes, restaurant inspections, building permits, zoning changes
- Links to news reports, such as newspaper articles and blog entries
- Fun from the web, such as Flickr photos taken nearby.

They say: "The idea is that we collect all of this information from across the web (and directly from city governments themselves) and slice it geographically, so you can stay updated with what's happening near you."

They also address the question of why this news, while clearly useful to consumers, might also be of use to journalists:

**We unearth a lot of government data that journalists might be interested in researching further. We only launched a few weeks ago, and already a few journalists have used our site to find trends and break stories on their own. This happens particularly because we make it so easy to browse government databases.**

Here is an example from Everyblock:

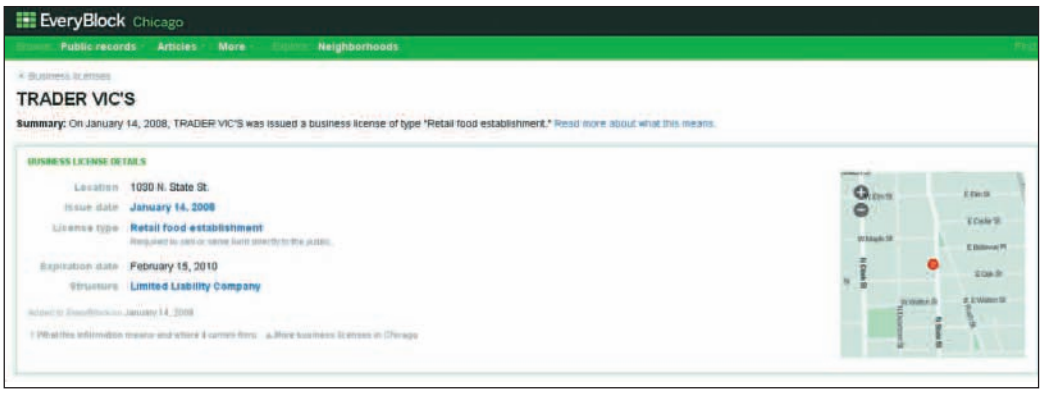
**http://chicagoist.com/2008/03/05/trader_vics_is.php**

## on the website

- Find the links to this story on the website.

It reports that a popular restaurant called Trader Vic's had closed down some years before, and there had been rumours of a new branch opening. They say that, thanks to the information at this link, the site can confirm that it is to reopen:

**http://chicago.everyblock.com/business-licenses/by-date/2008/1/14/540348/**




There is nothing new in this, in that journalists have been checking planning applications for ever, but this method is comprehensive and easy, and it is done at the block level. So the material that interests you and your next-door neighbour is there for you, whereas it wouldn't be in a traditional news outlet – on paper or online.

The sources of information offered on Everyblock are extensive. You can search geographically for public records, newspaper articles, press releases and more.

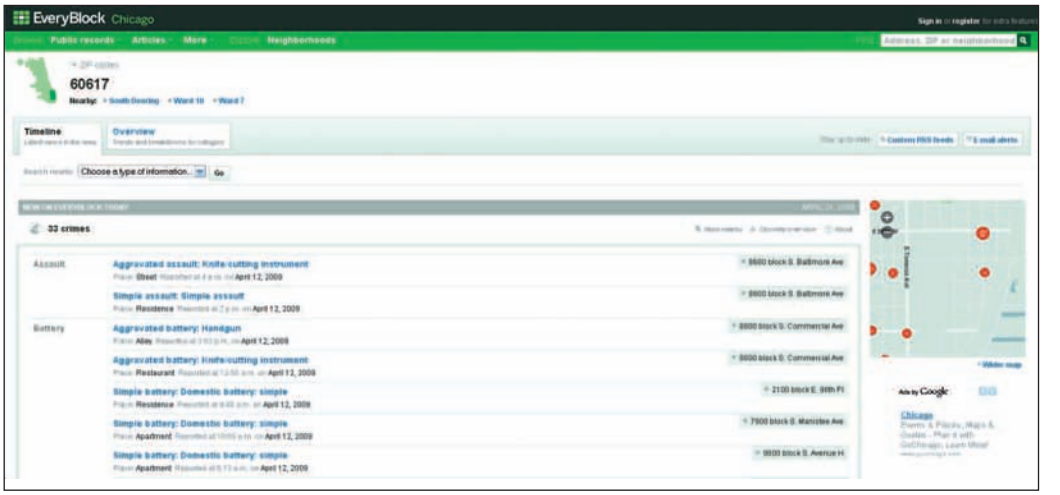
Under **public records** you get everything from building applications to crime stats and film locations, liquor licence applications, foreclosures and restaurant inspections.

Under **articles**, Everyblock says:

> **Every day, we read hundreds of articles in newspapers, TV news sites, specialty publications and local blogs, and we identify which geographical locations are being written about. Here, you can browse all of the specific location mentions we've identified. Use "Search near an address" to find media coverage near any specific block or neighbourhood.**

They sort that by neighbourhood, ward, zip code (postcode) and source.

Pick a zip code – I picked 60617 at random – and you get a list of stories and a Google Map showing where they happened.




Under **more** you get bike rack installations, local business reviews, lost and found, photos, local deals and real estate listings, all incredibly useful to those who want it, but easily ignored by those who don't. They are also incredibly useful to journalists, who can see if, for example, there are a large number of new liquor licence applications and could follow up by seeing what local people think about it; or an unusual spate of lost bicycles, or a missing person who several locals are anxious about. You can also explore by neighbourhood and get a digest of everything, from all of the categories above, which is happening there.

## *The* Washington Post

The *Washington Post* has created a Buzz Map, which charts the frequency with which news stories are blogged about, by area.

**on the website**

- Find links to current *Washington Post* hyper-local developments..

Click on one of the black and orange clusters and you get that area. Let's look at Georgetown University.

We see that there are 458 local blog posts and stories and 10 district stories. Latest postings appear beneath the map.

You can follow stories from this, or any other, area by clicking on the **radar** button and entering your exact location.

The chief executive of the *Washington Post* and Newsweek interactive, Caroline Little, told the Association of Online Publishers' conference that hyper-local sites must be driven by news:

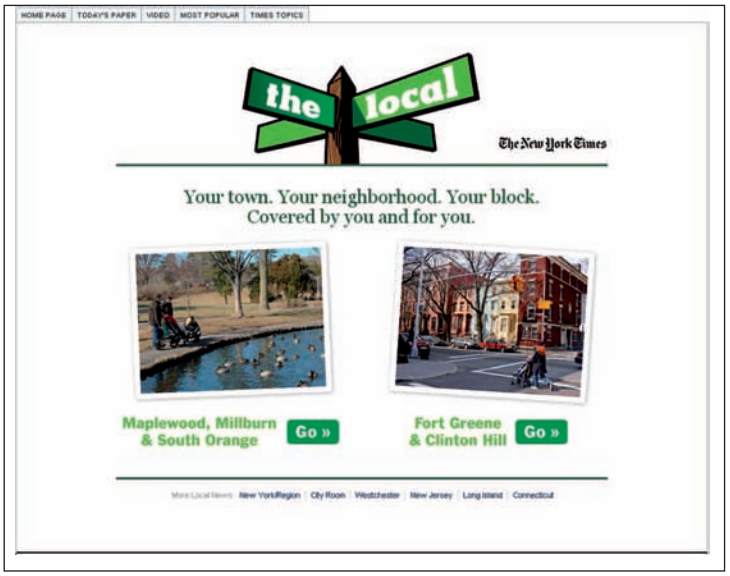
The Washington Post
Buzz Map
powered by outside in
Most blogged about places in D.C., Maryland and Virginia
Verizon Center
601 F St NW
458 Local blog posts and stories
10 The District stories
Arlington
Local blog posts and stories
The District stories
Local Blog Directory
Click on a bubble to find out what the buzz is. Bubble size denotes volume of media buzz.

> Some of the hyper-local sites that have failed, in my view, there isn't any hard data there, there is just people commenting or talking to each other.
>
> If it's not structured around something that is changing then it may as well be on Facebook or email or something else. We need to provide something to make it interesting.
>
> Publishing news is important to people locally, even if it's a crime database, what happened last night on what street, people want to know that.
>
> We also have local bloggers who live in the community. But I believe without that local news piece, which is fresh and updated constantly, you're just not going to build habit locally.

## New York Times *hyper-local*

**on the website**

- Find links to current *New York Times* hyper-local developments.




The *New York Times* has developed The Local, a series of hyper-local sites, in partnership with the City University of New York (CUNY) journalism school. Jeff Jarvis of the university sees such sites, run by a combination of professional journalists, journalism students and local residents, as highly collaborative. The sites contain news and discussion boards. He also feels that the old media ambition to own a town's news outlets is outmoded. Cooperation is the key, he says, in a blog post you'll find linked to on the website:

> **The one bit of advice I've given all these players is not to compete but instead to collaborate. We have to move past the old newspaper notion that one organization will - and can afford to – "own" a town. Those days are over. Instead, we'll have eco-systems of local news linked together, and to support them we need complementary content and coverage and networks to sell ads into and for all the players. In a network that links to its own members . . . all ships will ride with the tide of links.**

## questions

Jeff's is a controversial view. Is he right? If so, can traditional media adapt to this new way of working?

The *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* both use Outside.in and its Radar software to localise content. Outside.in (**http://outside.in/New_York_NY**) offers a geotagging toolkit that can be used by a content creator to add their material to the searchable network. At the time of writing this is not available for UK-based subscribers, but that may well have changed by the time you read this. See the website for updates.

Outside.in operates in thousands of cities, "tracking news, views and conversations". That means it aggregates local news, plus all sorts of professional and amateur local content. They call what they do placeblogging.

## Liverpool Echo

The *Echo* has produced a Merseyside news area on its site, in Beta at the time of writing, on which all the content is geotagged.

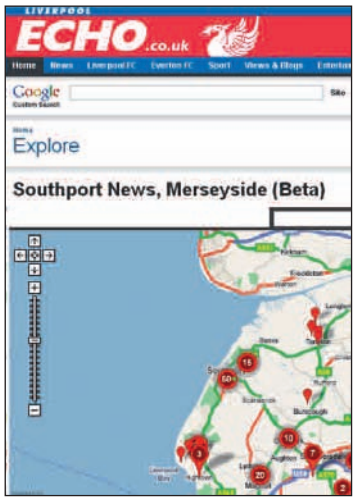
For example, I can click on the map and choose to narrow my search initially to Southport.

**on the website**

- Find a link to this map.

Latest stories from the town appear as heads and sells beneath the map. I can also search by typing a postcode into the **Find Location** box at top right or click on the pin over Southport that shows 50 stories geotagged to that general location and zoom in to see more specific geographical information.

Say I live in a part of Southport called Marshside. I can click on the pin in that area and find that two recent stories come up on a sort of speech bubble. I can click on them to read the full text.



## Middlesbrough Gazette

Gazettelive.co.uk has a **Communities** button on its horizontal nav bar that takes you to a map displaying the postcodes of the communities that are served online. You can also access them through a name list on the right.

Click on any community – I've chosen Billingham at random – and you get a screen with stories and an invitation to contribute to the local community blog.

gazettelive.co.uk
TS23 Billingham
NRG
Become a Blog Contributor
You can now contribute to the Gazette Live Communities in Teesside!
Once you have registered and created a profile you can submit text entries with pictures and photos, write about your favourite subjects in the area, tell our readership about any upcoming local events and follow other bloggers. All you have to do is Sign In or Register and submit an entry for an approval to be published by the blog administrator. Start blogging!

Click on that and, as I've highlighted in the grab, the invitation includes: "You can submit entries with photos, write about your favourite subjects in the area, and tell our readership about any upcoming local events. You can also follow other bloggers."

The left-hand nav bar reveals the depth of material that is available. I've expanded the **Communities** item in the grab above and you can see there is a range of community information that is somewhere on the way to being as comprehensive as that offered by Everyblock – including restaurant reviews, property price check, schools and colleges, and what's on.

The regional newspaper group Archant is developing plans for a range of services – shopping and what's on guides – that are tagged with postcodes. If you fancy a night out you can enter your postcode and an indication of how far you are prepared to travel, and get a tailored list of suggestions.

**on the website**

- Find a link to more on their plans on the website.

## *Hyper-local multimedia content as a model for local journalism*

Michael Rosenblum of RosenblumTV told Journalism.co.uk that newspapers and broadcasters need to embrace social media style set-ups of reporting. He said: "Journalism in and of itself is a kind of a network: you send reporters out into the community, they meet other people, they gather the stuff, reassemble it and distribute it."

He says that the more similar to social networks local news sites can make themselves, the more of an attachment their users will have to them. Best would be a "tapestry of text and video", moving away from the linear concept of separate pages for separate platforms.

He particularly sees this method as an ideal model for local media, as they "have the connections, the brand, the trust of the community. They know the stories, they have all the pieces keyed up and they just can't bring themselves to do it. Any idiot can learn to use video, but it takes years for a journalist to learn their community. That's an asset they have." There's a link to the full article on the website.

## *Applying hyper-local to print publications*

Such developments have inspired some to look again at the old parish pump local newspaper print model, and cover an area in great detail.

**on the website**

- Find links to more on applying hyper-local to print publications.

Jim Oldfield is editor of the *Rossington Community Newsletter* and six other titles that serve small communities around Doncaster. He told Journalism.co.uk that demand from the community for hyper-local print content is high. He said:

> **To this day, other areas say "can't we have a newsletter?"**
>
> **At first I think what was envisaged was little school stories. Instead the team has established truly hyper-local publications that fill a public thirst for information and local action.**
>
> **If you're going to take this hyper-local approach, you're going to have to dig out stories and to get yourself on the ground and get yourself out in the community. I don't think a lot of newspapers now have the sort of staff, or the time to be able to do this.**

At the *Middlesex Chronicle* group, which includes the *Hounslow Chronicle*, increases in circulation have been achieved by going back to local paper basics with a programme called Retro:

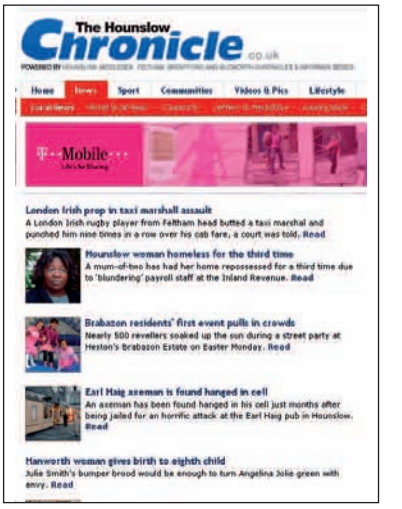
**http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=1&storycode=43195&c=1**

Editor Janice Raycroft told *Press Gazette*: "We ran a project in *Trinity Mirror Southern* called Retro – which has brought back the finely detailed news local people like. We've gone back and taken the paper ultra-local."

All print news stories are tagged with the name of the district in which they happen in the headline and intro, in a technique copied from online news reporting.

This has also involved ensuring that the paper's three district reporters closely cover a local patch each.

Janice Raycroft said: "They are going out to very, very small parts of the community - spending time with the WI. We've done a sort of *Ashes to Ashes* with the *Middlesex Chronicle*. It seems to be working."



Once again the paper covers local communities, postcode tagged, where the sort of news it covers – local school seeks sports coach volunteers, pub raises £1,000 with a charity pantomime – was squeezed out of local papers a generation ago when they decided to ape regional papers and forgot their local roots.

### *Hyper-local video*

Former regional newspaper journalist Michael Casey created a hyper-local video news site called YourThurrock.com in the Essex town.

**on the website**

- **Find the full article on Michael, and links to several other hyper-local video enterprises.**

He told Journalism.co.uk that "There's a level of parochialism and patronisation in the local press" which he is determined to avoid. He said local news coverage was tantamount to a form of social control, with local papers dominated by crime stories and news agendas that did not serve local communities well, their editorial content squeezed by advertising.

Michael and two other team members produce between four and eight hyper-local video reports a day, posted alongside community information.

14C2

## How to geotag your content

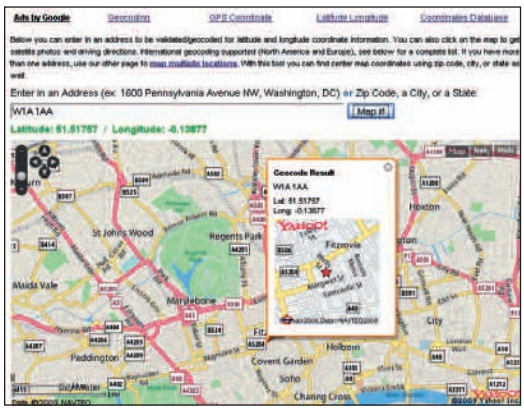
On a publisher's content management system you'll geotag content by filling in one of several information fields that you complete each time you write a story. Alongside fields for story type, key-word tags and author there will be a postcode field. Typically, the reporter selects from a drop-down menu to ensure that the tag is correctly applied. Once that is done the story will appear in searches for that area, and probably also on a news map.

Many of the software products and publishing platforms we have been working with so far allow you to geotag your content. With some you specify an exact longitude and latitude coordinate, with others you enter a postcode.

## *Finding the longitude and latitude coordinates of a story*

You can do that here:

**http://www.batchgeocode.com/lookup/**


Ads by Google
Geocoding
DMS Coordinate
Latitude Longitude
Coordinates Database
Below you can enter in an address to be validated/geocoded for latitude and longitude coordinate information. You can also click on the map to get
satellite photos and driving directions. International geocoding supported (North America and Europe), see below for a complete list. If you have more
than one address, use our other page to map multiple locations. With this tool you can find center map coordinates using zip code, city, or state as
well.
Enter in an Address (ex: 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC) or Zip Code, a City, or a State:
W1A 1AA
Map it!
Latitude: 51.51757 / Longitude: -0.13877
Geocode Result
W1A 1AA
Lat: 51.51757
Long: -0.13677
St John's Wood
Regents Park
Fitzrovia
Maida Vale
Marylebone
Paddington
Covent Garden
Holborn
Soho
Charing Cross
City
Holcom

Type in the exact address you want the story to be tagged to and the site generates a longitude and latitude reading. Here's an example.

I've typed in a central London address and got the longitude and latitude coordinates I need to link posts to it. If the software I am using can take these coordinates, I just enter them when posting to get the story tagged. More often, it is the postcode you use to tag a story or post.

## *Adding geocode to Blogger posts*

At the time of writing you need to go to the development version of Blogger – Blogger in draft – to do this. Go to:

**http://draft.blogger.com/home**

and click to make this your default dashboard.

When you use Blogger in draft, you'll see an option below the post editor to **add location**, Click on it and a map interface comes up. Type in the address of the place you want to link to and it is found for you. Click on **save** and publish the post.

Here's an example, locating Kew Gardens for a post on my gardening blog.

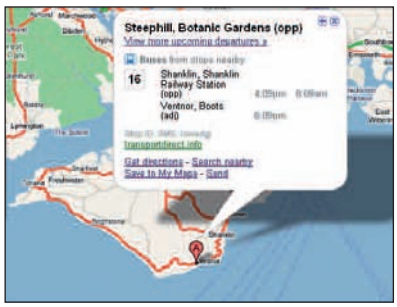
When you publish your post, the geotag is displayed below your blog post as a link, which will open up Google Maps so readers can see where you are writing about.

Posts are also added to a map that appears as a fixed element wherever you place it on your blog – high up on the right is a good position. Each new tagged post gets its own flag on the map, so readers can navigate to items using the map if they like.

I'll let Google explain how to add your posts to the map:

> To add it to your blog, go to the Add a Gadget page and click on Add Your Own. Paste in this URL: **http://blogmap-gadget.googlecode.com/svn/trunk/blogmap.xml** Now when you go to your blog you'll find the gadget asks you to add your blog's URL to this new element. Once you do that a map is pulled in. Each time you geocode a post, its location is added to the map. So readers can click on a flag to go to that post.

CLASSIC GARDENING
Showing posts with label Kew Gardens 250th anniversary.
One of the rarest plants in the world
Kew: The next 250 years
Posted on 21 October 2008
View post


Steephill, Botanic Gardens (opp)
View more upcoming departures »
16
Shanklin, Shanklin Railway Station (opp)
Ventnor, Boots (adj)
Get directions - Search nearby
Save to My Maps - Send

Here's the map on my blog after I've added Kew and a couple of other locations. Clicking on the Kew flag on my static map gives the reader an idea of what they will get if they click.

Also, if a reader clicks on the location link that has now been added to the end of each of your posts, they get a map with a great deal of additional information on it. Here's an example of another location I've linked to, Ventnor Botanical Gardens on the Isle of Wight.

This is extremely useful for a site and readers may want to follow up on your post by going there, or find out more about the place.

You can also geotag your blogging location by setting up a Feedburner account. One of the options it offers under **Optimise** is to

**Geotag Your Feed**. Take the longitude and latitude readers and insert them in the dialogue box, and your feed source is geographically linked to your location.

14C3

## Working with maps and creating mashups

There is a great deal more that we can do with maps. Indeed, we can make them the underlying, linking structure for our stories if that seems appropriate. We can add numerous stories on a particular theme to one map, or create a map for an individual story. That map can be the way the reader navigates the story – which opens up a wonderful new medium in which to tell a story using the full range of media at our disposal. This, for me, is where multimedia journalism really gets interesting.

But before we go any further, let's establish exactly what we mean by a mashup. To use Wikipedia's definition, a mashup is:

> **A Web application that combines data from one or more sources into a single integrated tool. The term Mashup implies easy, fast integration, frequently done by access to open APIs [Application Program Interfaces] and data sources to produce results that were not the original reason for producing the raw source data. An example of a mashup is the use of cartographic data from Google Maps to add location information to real estate data, thereby creating a new and distinct Web service that was not originally provided by either source.**

So, the map in a mashup is like the blank sheet of paper we once began with when we wrote a story; except this sheet is not exactly blank. It is a mapping program and we begin by deciding what area we want that map to cover. Once we have defined our mapping area we can add whatever we want to it.

There are numerous ways of creating a mashup, and they are developing all the time. So, for our purposes, I'm going to concentrate in the book just on one or two.

**on the website**

- **Find a good deal more on creating mashups, and it will be kept right up to date.**

## *Google Maps*

Google Maps is the platform on which many other brands of mashup are built. It has been used by a huge number of media companies. The *Manchester Evening News* created a map of murders in the city; the *Grantham Journal* used geocoding and mapping on the long-running saga of a heron that was eating fish from people's gardens.

Here are some easily achievable examples of what has been done, just to inspire you to think about what you could be doing.

**on the website**

- Find links to these maps and others.

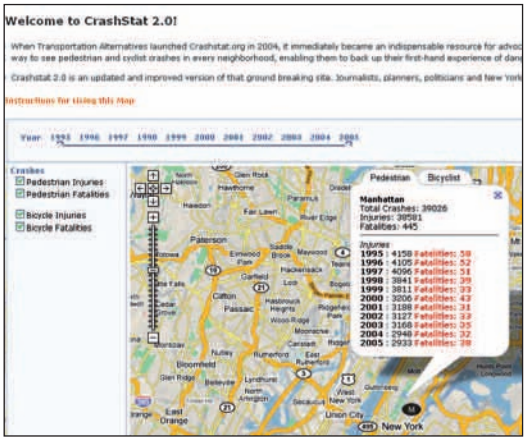
### *Teenage murders in London*

There was a series of murders of teenagers in 2008–9, when this map was compiled. The individual stories were shocking enough, but seeing all those fatalities clustered on a map of a relatively small area is sobering. Clicking on the flags brings up details of the victim.

### *Urban foxes*

Click on either the listing at the left or one of the flags in the map and you get details of the sighting.

*Accidents involving cyclists and pedestrians in New York*




**http://www.crashstat.org/**

*2012 Olympics*

This one doesn't use Google, but is worth looking at before we start adding multimedia content to our maps.

The map has news, blogs, venues, slide shows, photos and videos and is designed to emphasise the links that the games have with many areas and communities across the UK.

## questions

Take a look using the link on the website and see what you think the benefits and shortcomings of this approach are. Don't read on until you have decided.

A map is not the easiest way to find venues; a text search would be quicker. And the flags for blogs and stories might be useful if you wanted to read about Olympics-related events close to you, but actually a map is not the best way to present the Olympics unless you want to make it relevant to local communities. Also, when there are a lot of posts, the flags crowd in on each other and make it impossible to distinguish between them.

14C4

# Creating a Google Map mashup

## on the website

- **Find links to video and other tutorials on how to use Google Maps.**

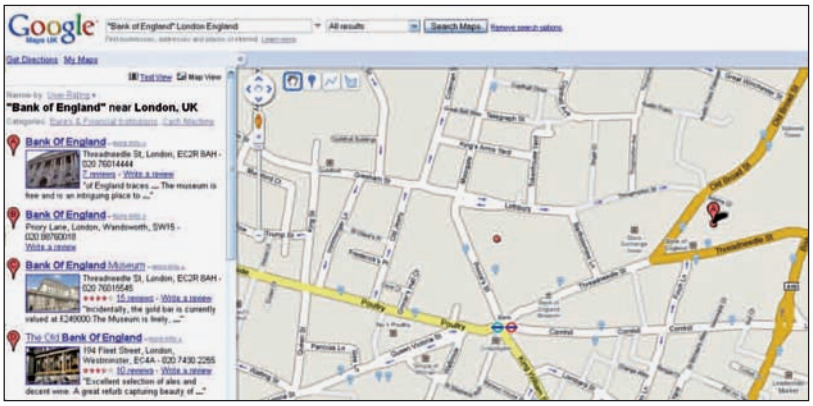
I'm going to create a map for a feature called "Chasing Soane and Hogarth across London". This is a travel feature I wrote originally for a print publication, but I'd like to add a map to it for the web version. I'm going to add other things as well, but we'll save that for later.

First you'll need to add Google Maps to your account – you'll find it top right on the main Google search page. At the top of the screen select the option **maps**. And then create a map.

## on the website

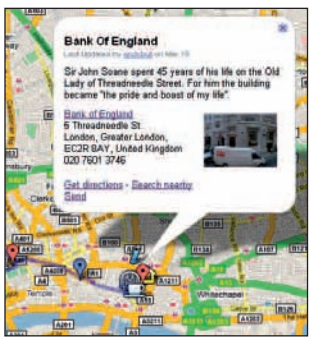
- **The one I'm creating is linked to on the website.**

So first I need to get to the right point on the map of London and mark the start point of the journey that underpins my feature. I type in "Bank of England" and get the location on Google Maps. This is the starting point of the journey described in the feature.




There are three basic tools with Google Maps. There is the **flag** tool. Click on the **flag icon** and you get a wide selection of different flags and other markers you can use. There is a **line** tool for drawing a line on the map to mark your route, and there is the **shape** tool, for drawing in an area you want to highlight.

I go through my route and put flag markers on the map for each of the locations written about in the feature. Once I have placed a marker I can add content to it – at its simplest a title and a text comment. I have used short extracts from my feature. I can also pick up information and links from the web. Here's an example of a combination of my material and that from others.


Bank Of England
Sir John Soane spent 45 years of his life on the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street. For him the building became "the pride and boast of my life".
Bank of England
6 Threadneedle St
London, Greater London,
EC2R 8AY, United Kingdom
020 7601 3746
Get directions - Search nearby
Send

If readers are going to follow my route they'll need directions, so I also add those. I can click on the **line** tool and draw a line on the map that they can follow on foot. I can also give them a guide to using public transport. I'm using the tube.

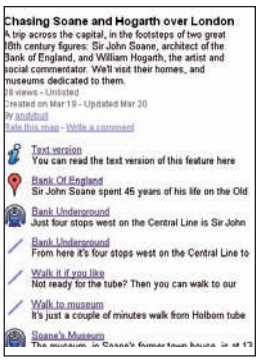
When I am writing on my flags I have the option to add rich text. That means I can add stills and video if I have them. If I don't, I can add material others have created.

I get a range of options for material to add, including photographs from Picasa and video from YouTube. Also, at each point on my route I get the option to **search nearby** for facilities, including restaurants. So I can add useful facilities to my map at each step along the way.

As I add various categories of information I need to distinguish them on the map, or I end up with a cluster of indistinguishable default blue flags. So I'm using red flags for my key locations. If I click on a flag I get a wide range of options. So I can turn my tube station markers into underground train symbols. I can add cafés and pubs, using coffee cup and drink flags.

Here's a grab as I begin to do that, showing a key location, a transport link and a café.

As I add things to my route, they appear not just on the map but also in a listing to the left. One thing to watch is that items are added here in the order you create them. So, if you are darting about a bit, you can get things in the correct route-order by clicking and holding and then moving the item to the position on your chronology where it ought to be. So my bottom item, on the Bank of England, can be moved from bottom to top of my journey planner.


Chasing Soane and Hogarth over London
A trip across the capital, in the footsteps of two great 18th century figures: Sir John Soane, architect of the Bank of England, and William Hogarth, the artist and social commentator. We'll visit their homes, and museums dedicated to them.
Text version
You can read the text version of this feature here
Bank Of England
Sir John Soane spent 45 years of his life on the Old
Bank Underground
Just four stops west on the Central Line is Sir John
Bank Underground
From here it's four stops west on the Central Line to
Walk it if you like
Not ready for the tube? Then you can walk to our
Walk to museum
It's just a couple of minutes walk from Holborn tube
Soane's Museum

I can add links to, for example, the websites of places I am recommending. This is a great time-saver. Why take a picture and write about a café or pub if someone else has done the job for you? That might sound like a travesty to an old-school journalist but it makes great sense. We can point to material we are confident is of good quality. We don't have to make everything ourselves. But we must be sure not to lower standards.

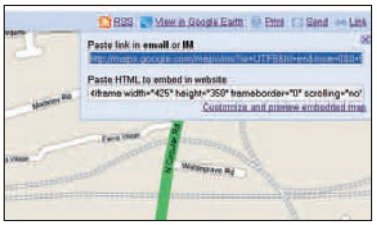
I can add as many contributions as I like from others that I feel my own readers will appreciate. So video, stills and reviews are all appropriate. But that's as far as I'm going to take this particular map. Now let's publish it.

## *Embedding your map into a blog or website*

**on the website**

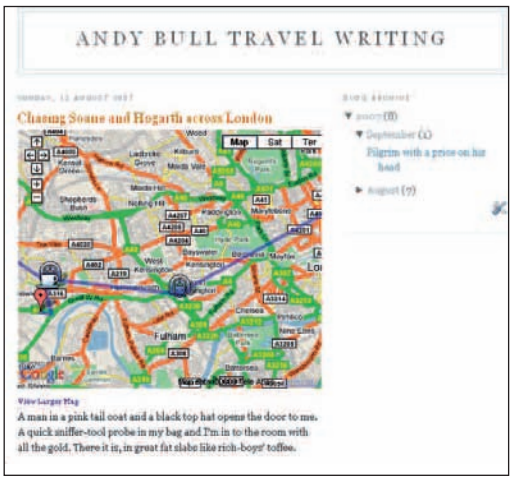
- **Find a link to Google's guide to doing this.**

First, open the map you want to embed and click on the word **Link**, which you'll find top right of the map. You'll see some code presented there. Copy it.




Paste the code into the file you want it to appear in. I want the map to appear at the top of my Blogger travel writing blog posting – the place where I have posted the text version of my travel feature.

If the reader wants to follow the map version of my feature they can click on **View larger map** and the full route is presented to them.


ANDY BULL TRAVEL WRITING
Chasing Soane and Hogarth across London
Map
Sat
Ter
Fulham
A man in a pink tail coat and a black top hat opens the door to me. A quick sniffer-tool probe in my bag and I'm in to the room with all the gold. There it is, in great fat slabs like rich-boys' toffee.

14C5

## Developing your website and blog through multimedia storytelling

What we have been doing so far is developing our multimedia storytelling. Let's take that further by looking in detail at one of a number of tools that enable you to add a wide range of multimedia content to any of your website stories or blog posts. The tool is called Apture.

**on the website**

- Find a link to Apture.

Once you have the software downloaded and you have told Apture the website or blog you want to apply it to, you are taken to the site and can check the edit interface is loaded. From there you can go to any point in any post or item you have uploaded and click to insert other media into it. When you do that Apture opens up an interface in which you search for relevant multimedia content. That might be a definition from Wikipedia, a video from YouTube, stills, sound recording, music, just about anything.

It means that any basic text post you write can be enhanced in all sorts of ways and quickly become a multimedia presentation.

You can define words or phrases and then link to them, or apply ready-prepared inserts of any type of media. You might just want a definition or a background article linked to a name or a phrase, or you might want to embed a video between paragraphs so that readers can see an illustration of what you are writing about. You can link to news stories – for example from the BBC.

The reader is alerted to your multimedia content by what looks like a hypertext link, but it has a logo before it to represent the sort of media linked there. Text appears as an open book, for example. Hover over the embeds and a box opens up with the content now visible.

Here's a book review post on which I've used the service as a demonstration of some of what it can do for you.

## on the website

- **The post is linked to from the website.**

The grab is what you see if you hover over the top, an embedded link from the phrase "President John F Kennedy". I've embedded links to a number of points where some readers might want background information. The box can be closed when the reader has finished with it. The video link you see I have chosen to embed as a permanently displayed item, but I could also have hidden that link behind a word or phrase in my text.

I found news stories, Wikipedia entries, stills and video, including interviews with people discussing the events I was writing about. By adding them – and we have to be selective about what we link to and

ensure it is of a high editorial standard, or we damage the authority of our own post – I've instantly added a depth of explanation, background and links to further related material that have added immeasurably to the depth and breadth of that one post.

14C6

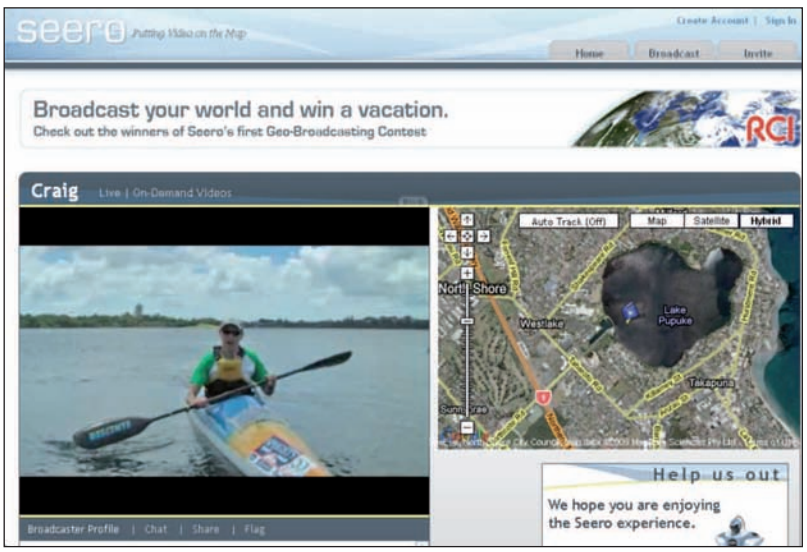
## Live geo-broadcasting

Another geotagging opportunity relates to live broadcasts. As we stream live video, we can display our location to our readers on an accompanying map. Qik allows you to do this, as do several other platforms, including Seero. Such broadcasts are also available after the event.

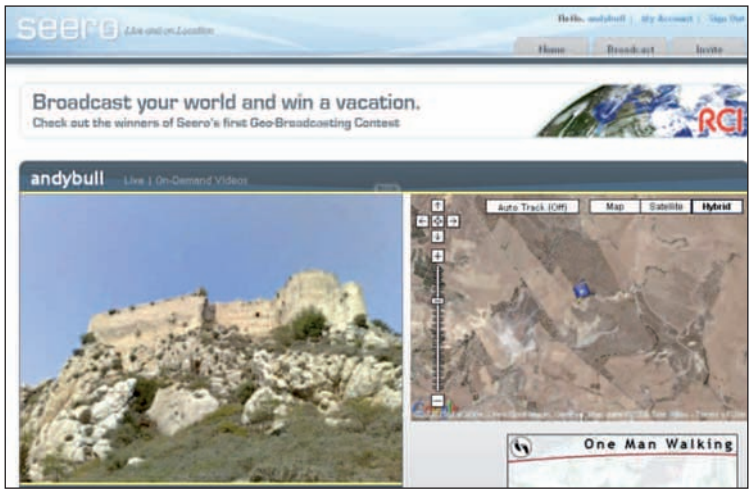
The exact features on such services vary, and I hesitate to list them because they are being upgraded all the time. But, essentially, as you broadcast live, your position, and your route if you are on a journey, is logged. As you travel your progress is represented on a Google map alongside your video, so you have the choice of conventional mapping, satellite or hybrid.

On Seero all sorts of additional information is accessible via the map. Clicking on it brings up tourist information, Wikipedia entries and so on. You can also have live chats with viewers as you move along.

Here's an example of the sort of package Seero users put together. There is a video screen alongside a Google map. In a live broadcast you see the broadcaster's route mapped. On a recorded video, you can use the map to move to different points in the journey.



Once you have an account set up you can broadcast to it. It's a good idea to have an existing video handy to place on your profile page. I happen to have a video I shot at St Helerion castle in Cyprus, and I'm going to use that to get started. Once I upload the video I'm asked for its coordinates so it can be geotagged. So I go to **http://www.batchgeocode.com/lookup/**, as covered earlier in this chapter, and find them. Then my video is live, and linked to the place in which it was filmed.




So I get the map alongside my video. Not the most exciting, but there you go, Cyprus in summer is a bit brown from the air.

I can also broadcast live. To do that I first set up the coordinates of my location. I'm at home so I find that location on Batchgeocode and set things up. If I am using a webcam and mic, Seero checks the settings and then links me up so I can go live from my computer. If I want to broadcast on the move I need a laptop and a wi-fi dongle. I set them up, establish my longitude and latitude coordinates in the usual way, and set off. Viewers see my video alongside the map of my route.

## on the website

- **Geocoding and live broadcast sites are developing all the time. Check on the website for news of the latest developments, demonstrations and tutorials.**

14C7

## Exercises and projects

### Exercise 1

Look at a range of UK and US publications that use geocoding. Analyse the range and nature of the material aggregated there, and identify the sources of it.

### Exercise 2

Identify sites on which there is a healthy input of geotagged material from users.

### Exercise 3

Monitor services such as Everyblock and see what stories you can identify and develop from the material aggregated there.

### Exercise 4

Explore Google Maps and identify really effective map creators. See what you can learn from them.

### Exercise 5

Explore Apture and identify users who bring significant additional information to their posts using it.

### Exercise 6

Explore Seero, Qik and other live geo-broadcasting services. Identify effective broadcasters and analyse why they are successful.

## Projects

1 Geocoding: if you have created a hyper-local blog or website as one of your projects, explore geocoding content on it. If you don't have such a project, create a small one on which you can practise geocoding.

2 Aggregating geocoded content: explore what geocoded information is available to you and see if you can add local council and other information to your hyper-local site or site area.

3 Write a travel feature or other article with a geographic basis and apply it to a Google map. As well as applying your own material to the map you create, research and add other complementary multimedia content to it.

4 Apply Apture to one of your blogs or websites. Take a number of articles or postings and add the full range of multimedia content to them.

5 Take a selection of your videos and apply them to Seero.

6 Experiment with using Seero as a live video broadcasting format. Compare it with Qik and other software.

## on the website

- Check for the latest updates in geocoding, mapping, mashups and live geo-broadcasting opportunities
- Submit your projects for our comments
- Watch masterclasses.

chapter fifteen

# *Still-picture editing and telling stories through multiple still photographs*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

- Picture editing
- Telling stories through multiple still photographs
- Identifying free and inexpensive sources of images.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- Video tutorials covering the software packages described here
- A full range of links to all these and additional resources.

In this chapter we are going to cover how to edit and publish pictures to the standard required of a trainee multimedia journalist. We'll also look at your role as an informal picture editor. That is, someone who has to be able to source pictures quickly, and ideally for no money, to put on your website.

15C1

## Picture editing

Picnik is one of the simplest and most powerful picture-editing tools. It does the basics – resizing, cropping, autocorrecting and so on – but it also does a great deal more. It allows you to do all that Photoshop – which is expensive and complicated – allows you to do, but simply and for free using the basic version, and for a modest monthly sum for the premium version.

You can create a wide range of effects, manipulate pictures and combine images. You can pull in photos from most web resources, or upload your own from your computer. You can add text over the image – very useful for creating picture and headline combinations for print features or special reports, headers for web pages or logos for sites, special reports or picture by-lines.

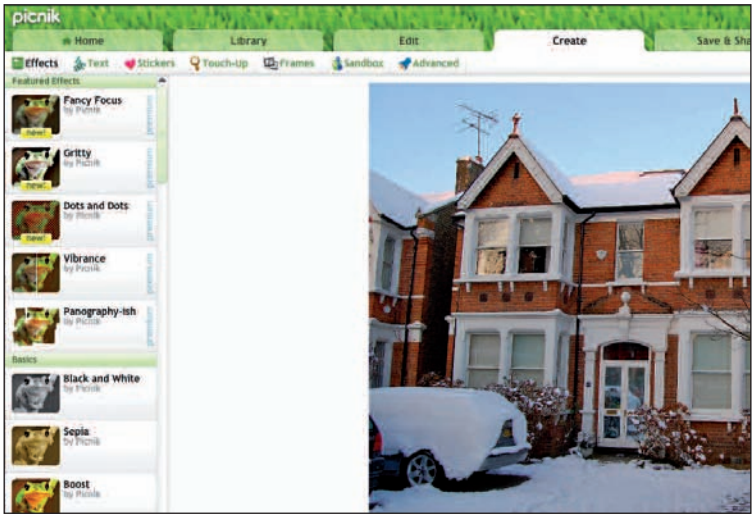
**on the website**

- **Find a link to Picnik, plus links to a range of Picnik tutorial videos, covering both the basics and more advanced work.**

### *Using Picnik*

Once you have uploaded an image or images, the first step is to clean them up. Clicking on the **Edit** button brings up a line of secondary buttons beneath the top horizontal nav that enable you to autocorrect, resize, crop, rotate, adjust exposure, sharpen and remove red-eye from the picture.

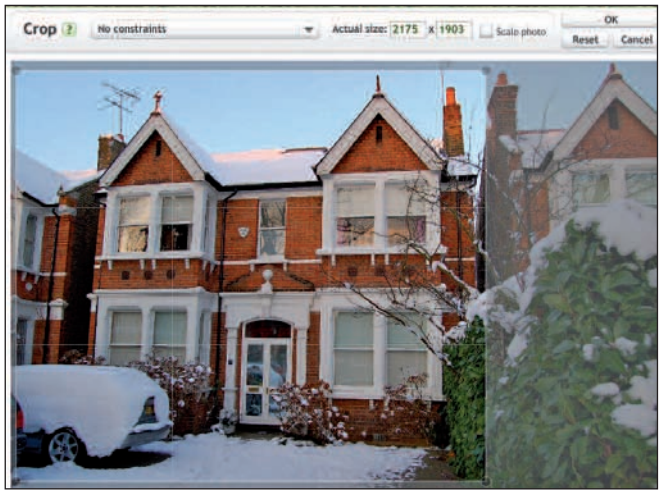
Next to **Edit** is **Create**, where you can add effects, text and manipulate your photographs.




Some of the effects are available only to premium subscribers, but the rest offer plenty of scope. Among the effects are sepia, black and white, heat map and other colour manipulations. Experiment with them and you'll see just what can be achieved.

Here's an original photograph:

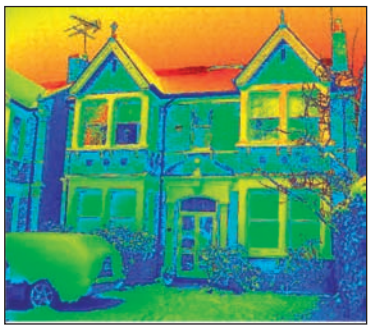
First it is cropped.




Then a range of effects can be applied to it. Here are just a few of the options:

- Sepia

- Heat map

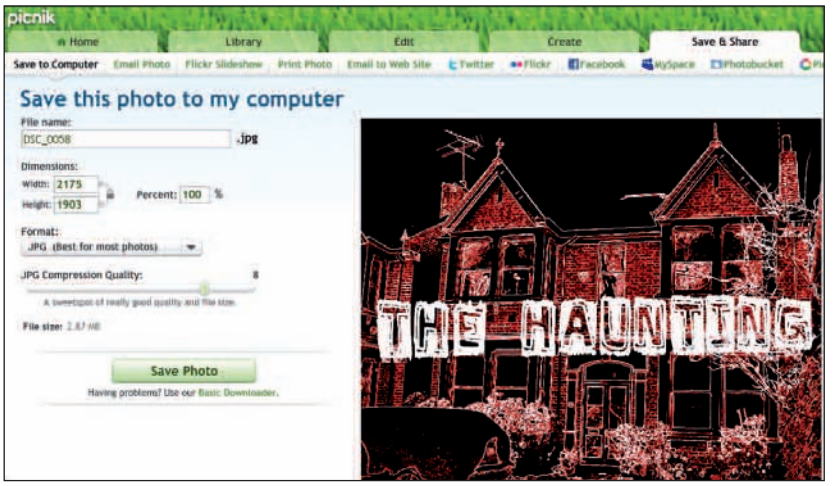


- Boost, which heightens colours

- Neon.

Another of the options under **Create** is to add text:

When you are done, save the image to your computer ready for use on your website, blog or print publication.




15C2

## Telling stories through multiple still photographs

In this section we are going to look at innovative ways of telling stories through still images. A number of free software applications enable you to feed multiple pictures of an event, or

of a particular place or activity, into a file. Users can navigate that file, travelling through the world created by the stills, zooming in on a particular one, zooming out, changing their point of view and generally navigating through the world these stills have created. They are very simple for us as photographers to use, yet very effective. And we can include a text introduction to our picture story and sometimes tag individual pictures and people in those pictures.

These panoramas can be created collaboratively as well – several photographers can collaborate on a big picture story, and you can invite users to add their material, so UGC is very easy to add to a project, when appropriate.

## *Microsoft Photosynth*

Microsoft Photosynth is one of the easiest ways to tell stories through multiple still photographs.

**on the website**

- **Find a link to Photosynth, and to tutorials on it:**

  **http://livelabs.com/photosynth/**

Microsoft says of Photosynth:

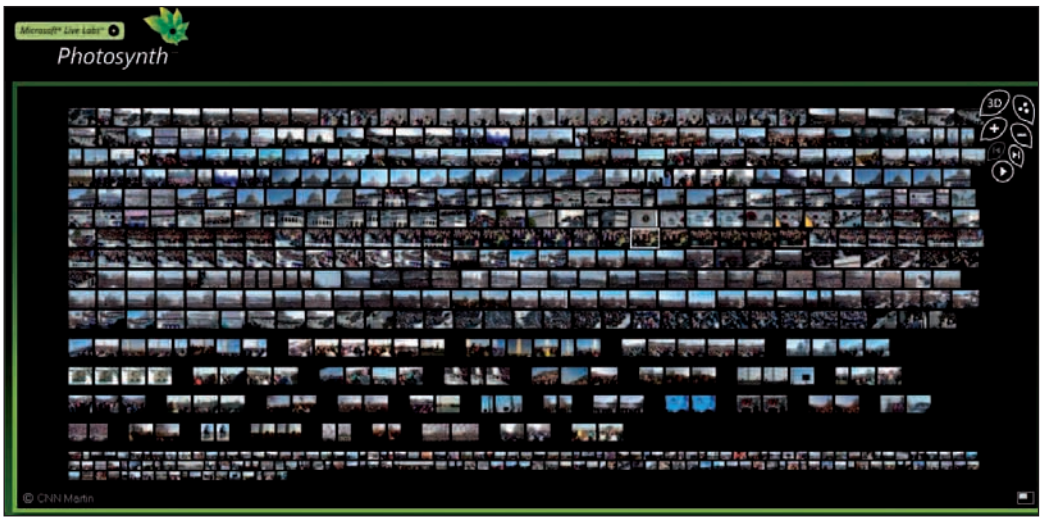
> **With nothing more than a digital camera and some inspiration, you can use Photosynth to transform regular digital photos into a three-dimensional, 360-degree experience. Anybody who sees your synth is put right in your shoes, sharing in your experience, with detail, clarity and scope impossible to achieve in conventional photos or videos.**
>
> **Synths constitute an entirely new visual medium. Photosynth analyses each photo for similarities to the others, and uses that data to build a model of where the photos were taken. It then re-creates the environment and uses that as a canvas on which to display the photos.**

Photosynth installs two programs on your computer: a Web browser plug-in for viewing synths and an application (called Photosynth) for creating them.

Journalism.co.uk reported that the tool was experimental at the time of writing (December 2009) but publicly available, and was first used by CNN in its coverage of the Obama inauguration to thread hundreds of photos together. These create a scenic panorama but can also be zoomed in on to inspect one part of an individual image.

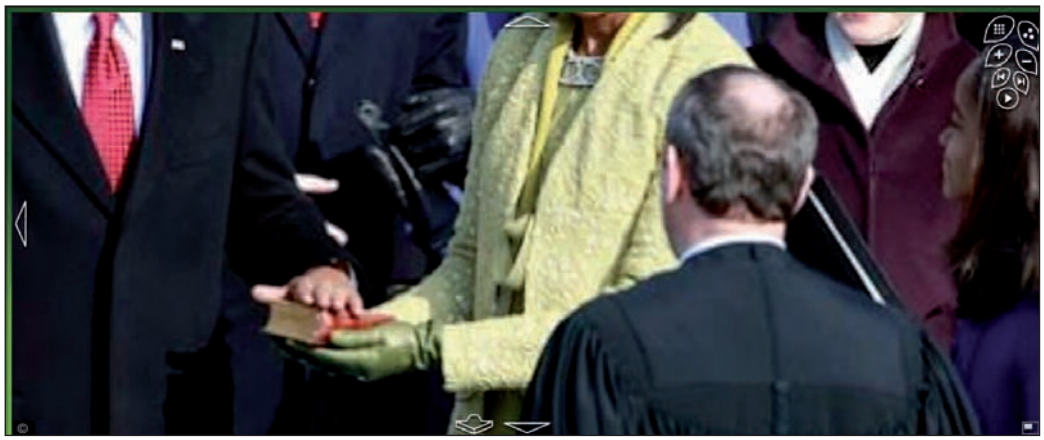
**http://photosynth.net/view.aspx?cid=05dc1585-dc53-4f2c-bfb1-4da8d5915256**

This synth contains 615 individual stills photographs. Here they are, displayed in a grid:




The one that I was viewing previously is outlined in white. Buttons at the bottom of the screen enable me to zoom in or out of this picture and to navigate around the scene. As I reach the edge of one still, Photosynth takes me on to another that represents the scene to right, left, above or below, depending on where I choose to move and the images that are available.

I can choose to zoom right in on an element of a picture.



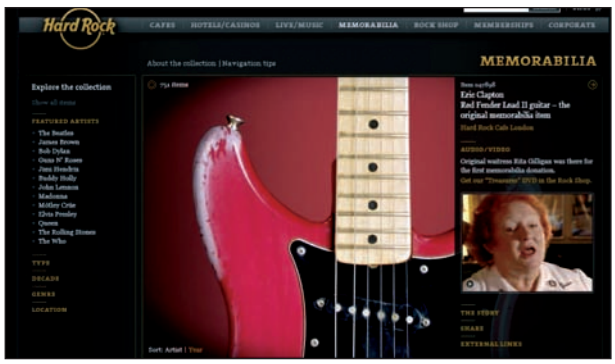
One of the exciting things about this software is that it would enable you to cover a major event from a multiplicity of viewpoints.

## on the website

- Find links to the examples of Photosynth in action featured below.

*Hard Rock Café's memorabilia collection*

**http://memorabilia.hardrock.com/**



Here you'll see that video clips have been included that relate to individual pictures. We learn that the collection began when Eric Clapton gave one of his guitars and said it should be hung on the wall. The clip tells the story of how that happened. There are also audio clips that play automatically when you select a particular picture, and text linked to many of the pictures.

On the left of the screen is an index of the artists whose possessions are in the collection, so you navigate through your favourites.

*The Grand Canal in Venice*

**http://photosynth.net/view.aspx?cid=ffa4cce7-d8ec-44f8-9eac-ab28b838cdcb**

The pictures here are mainly of the north side of the canal. Two photographers working together could have covered both sides and knitted their contributions into one.

*The Boxer*

**http://photosynth.net/view.aspx?cid=5a6288c3-bf08-462c-8f21-8540202e304d**

This is a photographic study of David Croft, head instructor and martial arts expert, at the Bradford Thai Boxing club, photographed by James Glossop, the *Times* Young Photographer of the Year 2008.

### *How to create and publish a Photosynth project*

Once you have opened an account, click on **Create** and then upload the pictures you want to use in your synth into the interface that appears. You give the synth a title, tags and can add a description. You can also specify what copyright you want to assign to the project, from Creative Commons to "don't even think about copying this".

Photographing for a successful synth really requires you to fire away pretty heavily, covering your subject with overlapping stills taken from all sorts of angles. The more material you create, the more impressive the synth will be. So you can forget about carefully framing each individual shot and then agonising about which to use and which to discard. As long as they are sharp, they'll fit into the sequence you have created, even if the composition of each is not perfect.

**on the website**

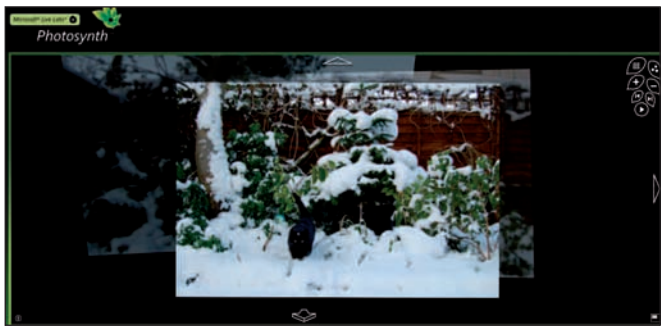
- Find links to Photosynth blogs and tutorials:

  **http://blogs.msdn.com/photosynth/archive/2009/03/31/photosynth-primer-from-a-passionate-new-user.aspx**

### *How to geotag your synths*

You can do this when viewing your synths. There is a **globe** icon below your synth title on the right side of the page. Click that icon and place your synth on the map by finding your location and then clicking where you want the synth geotagged. There is a **save** button at the bottom of that map pop-up.

Here's a synth I created:



And here it is, once tagged, on the Photosynth map:  a great way to get your work noticed.

*How to post your synths to your website or blog*

Click on the **Embed** symbol alongside the globe, pick up the code and paste into your site.

WRITE, EDIT, BLOG
MULTIMEDIA JOURNALISM FROM ANDY BULL
THURSDAY, 2 APRIL 2009
Photosynth experiment
Subscribe in a reader
TWITTER UPDATES
POSTED BY ANDY BULL AT 05:15 0 COMMENTS LINKS TO THIS POST

## *Gigapan*

Another stills panorama service is called Gigapan. It's described as a visual tool that allows people to deeply explore panoramic photographs – and to collaboratively tell stories through pictures. It's part of Carnegie Mellon University's Global Connection Project.

This brings technology right into the picture-taking process. You mount your camera on what they call the Gigapan robot, set the panorama you want to photograph, and pictures are automatically taken that carefully cover the whole of that panorama. Then you upload the

images into a thing called the Gigapan Stitcher and it automatically knits them together, giving the patchwork which the viewer can then zoom in and out of.

## on the website

- Find a link to a video demonstration of Gigapan:

  **http://www.contentious.com/2008/12/04/gigapan-pictures-you-can-really-get-into/**

There is also a Gigapan of Obama's inauguration, created on this software and featured on the 10,000 Words blog:

**http://www.10000words.net/2009/01/post-inauguration-wrap-up-tech-coverage.html**

This is the biggest group photo you ever saw. The main shot is of the assembled crowds. Beneath the main image are a series of snapshots that went into making it. And if you click on one of these, the main screen zooms in on that image.

## *What this technology opens up for you*

These picture-stitching technologies open up the opportunity to cover an event comprehensively with the use of stills. For local news websites they achieve what was once the goal of print editions – to get pictures of as many locals as possible in the paper, because a proportion of them would buy it.

Now an event can be covered exhaustively. A series of Photosynths or Gigapans could be created during an event, and everyone who took part could be photographed.

15C3

## Identifying free and inexpensive sources of images

**on the website**

- Find links to a wide range of free or inexpensive stock image resources.

It is vital that you have a library of useful original and stock images available to slot into pages on your blogs, websites and print publications. Most text-based web stories are lightened with the addition of an appropriate stock image, and you need to gather a good range of relevant images that can be slotted in as needed.

15C4

## Exercises and projects

### Exercise 1

Practise selecting, cropping, correcting and applying various effects to images.

### Exercise 2

Search for Photosynth projects and see how well they work. How could they be improved?

## Projects

1 Use Picnik to create a header for your blog or website, and a range of buttons for elements of the site.

2 Create a number of Photosynth projects and upload them to your website or blog. Use Photosynth to cover events attended by large numbers of people.

3 Try using Photosynth to shoot a sequence of photographs of a race. Can you get from starting line to finishing tape in an unbroken sequence?

4 Build up a library of both original photographs shot by you and colleagues and free stock images that relate to the subject matter of your website or blog.

## on the website

- Follow video tutorials on picture editing using Picnik and Photosynth creation
- Find the resources needed to begin building a picture library
- Look out for photography masterclasses
- Find a wide range of additional photography links, information and resources.

chapter sixteen

# *Editing and presenting audio and video news bulletins and longer magazine-style programming*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

- Gathering material for audio and video bulletins
- Selecting and editing material for a bulletin
- Scripting the bulletin
- Presenting the bulletin
- Creating a longer, magazine-style programme.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- Video interviews with the creators of short news bulletins and of longer online magazine programmes
- Extensive links to material discussed here
- A wide range of additional tutorials, examples of best practice and other resources.

You may find yourself in charge of pretty much every aspect of an audio or video bulletin, or work as a two-person team of presenter and cameraperson, the one handling the camera usually being responsible for editing and publishing the finished bulletin. It is common for one multimedia journalist to identify potential stories and follow them up by conducting interviews – on video or audio as appropriate – and either taking or sourcing still photographs. You'll edit the material down to the required length (most online bulletins are around three minutes long), write the script and put the whole package together. You may present the bulletin live, but it is much more likely to be recorded.

When it comes to longer, magazine-style programmes the presenter is likely to be one of a small team, so we'll look at how that team is made up and what the presenter's role is in it.

We will also look in detail at developing our skills as editors, skills that apply just as much to editing for print or text-based websites as they do for audio and video packages.

16C1

## Gathering material for audio and video bulletins

You'll need time to gather material for your audio or video bulletin. If it's an early morning one, you will want to have gathered a good deal of material the day before, perhaps taking the afternoon or evening to record and edit interviews destined for the next day's bulletin, then beginning again two or three hours before you publish so you can add the latest news and ensure that anything you did yesterday is still relevant.

A lunch-time bulletin might again involve a split shift, the previous afternoon or evening used for gathering a certain amount of material, the morning devoted to breaking stories and writing the script.

With a bulletin going out in the evening, much if not everything is usually done on the day.

Not all bulletins contain a majority of original content. On a local news website they may well do, but if you are producing a bulletin of national or international news you will be selecting from material made available to you from sources including other multimedia journalists in your organisation, agencies and freelances.

On a B2B site, you may well be gathering the best stories destined for the website that day, taking the first couple of paragraphs and adapting them for your bulletin.

If you are doing hourly bulletins, it's a question of getting your agenda set for the day you are covering, and then adapting and freshening things up on each subsequent bulletin.

Some bulletins are very simple, and we've looked at a number of them as we have worked through the book. What we are doing here is focusing on bulletins that involve a high level of skill as a reporter, editor and presenter.

**on the website**

- **Find links to bulletins, magazine programmes and video tutorials on presenting.**

Let's look at some bulletins and how the material was gathered for them.

## Lloyd's List's *"On the Radar" bulletin*

Liz McCarthy and Adam Charlton are responsible for the "On the Radar" bulletin, which goes out weekly on the website of *Lloyd's List*, a B2B title that covers the shipping industry.

**on the website**

- **Find a video interview with Adam and Liz, plus the edition of the bulletin that I watched them record.**

Liz is responsible for the script and presenting, Adam for filming, editing and publishing the bulletin.

Liz says she starts by looking at the 10 or 20 most-read stories on the website – so popularity is at the basis of the selection process. She cuts them down for broadcast, taking three top stories and then a series of others relevant to key areas of *Lloyd List*'s coverage – the dry bulk industry and the tanker industry – finishing up with a number of briefs to end the bulletin.

She reads the script aloud as she adds items, rewriting them where necessary to make sure they work when spoken, and tries to keep everything in the present tense.

Liz says the tough thing to master was her breathing: "It's very hard while reading aloud to breathe at the right time to make the sentence come across as it should do." Another thing was to control movement when on camera. Liz reads standing up before a green screen, to which a spinning globe background is added in the editing process. She tries not to move her head too much, partly because stills and video clips are inserted into a box above her left shoulder and she mustn't move in front of it. The team doesn't use an autocue. Instead, the script is blown up to a large type size and cut into short segments. Mark holds the segments just above the camera. It's a low-tech solution but Liz finds it avoids the problem of her eye movements being visible to viewers as she reads. If such movements are visible it can look as if the presenter is watching tennis as they read.

After the recording, Adam takes over, working on Final Cut Express and adding the spinning globe background (created in software called After Effects), captions, stills to illustrate the main stories and, when they have them, video inserts. They have had dramatic mobile phone footage of a shipping disaster in the past. Stills come from the web editor and are used to illustrate items of breaking news. They also insert snippets of interviews when they have them.

The team would like to develop the bulletin, perhaps running a short daily one and a weekly, extended magazine-style broadcast with discussion, forecasts and input from some of the many highly knowledgeable journalists on the title.

16C2

## Selecting material for a bulletin

Item selection and order are crucial. Your editing skills will often be heavily tested in boiling down a mass of information, much of it clamouring to be broadcast, into a three-minute bulletin. The word count on that is probably about 500 words – not much more than a page lead in a newspaper or a couple of online news stories.

Whether your bulletin is for a locally based website allied to a newspaper, a B2B publication or a national or international audience interested in general news, there are some general principles:

- You will have to be highly selective
- The bulletin needs to give a fair, rounded picture of what matters to your audience
- The bulletin must have variety: a mix of heavy and light stories.

### *Deciding on a running order*

As ever, put the audience at the centre of all that you do. In selecting material we go for a range of items that are important to them, plus – depending on the general tone of our coverage and our audience – some information that is less vital but nevertheless interesting, entertaining or out of the ordinary.

As you get more experienced your instincts will take over and you will know what is your lead, what to follow it with and just the right light item to end with. There's no real shortcut to getting there other than practice, and while we practise we will try to be as objective as we can about our item selections and running orders – always acknowledging that journalism is an instinctive art as much as a practical craft.

Here are some questions to ask to help us sift and order items. They are keys to good editing and apply just as much to editing decisions in a print publication or a text-based website as they do to audio and video bulletins:

1 **How significant or important is the story?**

2 **How many of our readers does it affect, and to what degree?**

- All of them a lot?
- All of them a bit?
- Some of them a lot?

3 **Will it change their lives, or affect how they behave?**

If a story affects all of them a lot that gives us a good idea that this is a top story; all of them a bit, and some of them a lot, are harder to judge against each other. Here are some more considerations:

4 **What material impact will the story have?**

5 **Will it cost them money or make them money?**

6 **Will it advantage or disadvantage them in some significant way?**

On a B2B title, questions of financial or commercial advantage or disadvantage are vital; for a general audience they are also important.

Here's another key question:

7 **What will the audience's reaction be?**

Will they be angry, shocked, delighted, mildly amused? We are including items of human interest here, where the strict significance of a story may be low but it is nevertheless of great interest. Such items can become major talking points. For example, one 27-year-old woman dying of ovarian cancer is a much bigger story if that woman is a very well-known TV personality such as Jade Goody, and interest in her plight crosses all audience boundaries:

8 **Will they expect to hear about it?**

Sometimes we are behind on a story, or shut out completely from someone else's exclusive. But if the audience are aware of it from other sources and it affects or interests them, we need to get in on the act.

9 **How fresh is it?**

News just in is valuable for a bulletin – especially if we are doing bulletins hourly and struggling to make them different during the day and to point up developments in the stories we are covering.

Fresh stories often jump into a bulletin high up, just because they are fresh, and this freshness may not be balanced entirely by their significance. Sometimes we reflect afterwards and wonder why an item was the lead in a bulletin for an hour or two. The answer can be that it was fresh. Later it may drop down the rankings.

### *Audio and video*

The fact that, for video, we have good pictures and, for audio, good actuality, can affect an item's inclusion and placing in a bulletin. For an audio bulletin, shouts of anger at a demonstration, with the reporter describing the police charging the demonstrators, batons drawn, bring the story to life, as do pictures from the thick of the mêlée in a video bulletin.

We have to consider whether we are over-promoting a weak story just because we have good sounds or pictures. If we are excited by great footage that's understandable, but we must not lose sight of the audience and their level of interest in the story.

### *Stories that go together*

When it gets to the order of items, and we have two or more that focus on different aspects of a story, then it makes sense to keep them together, otherwise the bulletin can seem disjointed or repetitive.

### *And finally . . .*

Finding a light item for the end of a bulletin helps round things off. In a general bulletin, sport is often used to finish on a lighter note. Then there are the lighter, human stories – the skateboarding ducks that ITN's *News at 10* used to specialise in when it was still something of a national treasure.

On a B2B bulletin, a lighter story about an industry event or other, softer news item can be used to round things off.

## ***Scripting the bulletin***

In traditional broadcasting organisations there are very strict guidelines on how a script should be put together. Scripts have a great deal of information in them. If the bulletin is for TV, then the words spoken at each point by the presenter will be in one column on each page of the script with, in the other, a note of whether or not the presenter is in vision, or whether stills or graphics are filling the screen. Cues to video inserts will be given, together with the

first and last words spoken – the in words and the out words – by the reporter on the tape. On radio, the same applies to taped audio items.

Exact, second-by-second timings will be given for each element in the bulletin.

With multimedia bulletins practices vary. In a few organisations, broadcast procedures have been adopted. In the vast majority, things are less formal. If you are producing a bulletin yourself, things are simpler. If you are part of a team, and others are responsible for cueing in clips of video or audio, they need to know exactly when to run them.

In the current state of development, most video and audio bulletins created by multimedia journalists are done simply, with the elements recorded in advance and the package edited together before being published online.

That's not to say things will not change but, for now, a multimedia journalist will not be expected to work to traditional broadcast standards. Since that may change, let's take a quick look at what those standards are.

Here's an example of how a script for a broadcast news bulletin is presented. Exact formats vary, but most look quite a lot like this:

| | |
|---|---|
| Simon I/V [short for in vision] | A cull of elephants is to be allowed in South Africa, for the first time in 15 years. |
| Still: bull elephant | In a statement, the South African government said a cull was needed to control elephant numbers. |
| Still: herd of elephants | The elephant population is thought to have grown from 8,000 to 18,000 since culls were banned in 1995. |
| Simon I/V | The statement acknowledged that the issue would rouse "strong emotions", and the news will anger many animal rights campaigners |
| Still: tourists riding on elephants | The capture of wild elephants and their use in elephant safaris will also be banned. |
| Simon I/V | In the statement, Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Marthinus van Schalkwyk said culling would be an option of last resort that was acceptable only under strict conditions. |

Here's how a pre-recorded report is marked in the script:

| | |
|---|---|
| Simon [the presenter] I/V | The people of Looe in Cornwall spent the day reinforcing flood defences following yesterday's severe flooding. |
| Still: flooded town centre | Shops in the town and over 150 homes were flooded yesterday. |
| Simon I/V | There are fears that exceptionally high tides will bring further problems tonight. Emily Sutton has this: |
| In words: "To begin with, the water . . ."<br><br>Supers [captions that on TV are inserted live when a person is interviewed as part of a video]<br><br>Jane Townshend, mayor 22"<br>[" = seconds]<br><br>Robbie Albery, lifeboat coxswain 45"<br><br>Out words: ". . . could face even more serious flooding."<br><br>Time: 1'22" | |

If you have to write a script that you will deliver live to fit visuals – video or stills – that have already been edited into a sequence, then each still or sequence in the video will be marked, so you can time your reading to coincide with the appropriate image. Here's an example where a series of stills have been edited into a slide show. The timings here show the period from the start of the report when each item should be read.

| | |
|---|---|
| Simon I/V<br>Cue 3"<br>Simon OOV [out of vision]<br>GVs remains of car in crater | Two car bombs in the Iraqi capital Baghdad have killed at least 19 people, Iraqi police say. |
| Cue 5"<br>GVs Shopping centre | The most deadly attack was a parked car bomb in a shopping area on the east bank of the Tigris. |
| Cue 12"<br>GVs bodies | It killed at least 15 people and wounded 45. |
| Cue 15"<br>GVs damage to police station | A suicide car bomber also attacked a police headquarters in east Baghdad, killing four people, including two officers. |
| Cue 21"<br>GVs damaged houses | There was widespread damage to houses hit by the blast. |

The skill here is in balancing our words with our pictures. Stills can be held, but the viewer will get bored if they have had time to absorb the information in the still long before it is replaced by the next shot in a sequence.

Likewise, if we have a five-second video clip we can only accompany it with five seconds' worth of words – or about 15. If necessary, we must find a second illustration that addresses the same point so that our words can run over two clips and still be relevant to what the audience is being shown.

16C3

## Presenting the bulletin

In US television the news anchor is highly prized. To a lesser but still important extent in British TV, the person who reads the news is a key figure, and their personality and the impression the audience gains of them is vital. This is less the case in radio, where there's no talking head to scrutinise, tie to dislike or hairstyle to critique.

Also, with short bulletins the presenter – on video as with audio – is businesslike and needs just to be easy to watch and/or listen to; to be believable. Awkward presenters whose eyes are glazed as they focus on the autocue don't do a bulletin any favours.

As a multimedia journalist you are expected first and foremost to be an effective news gatherer, but if you have an aptitude for presentation as well it will certainly help your progress.

## *Your look*

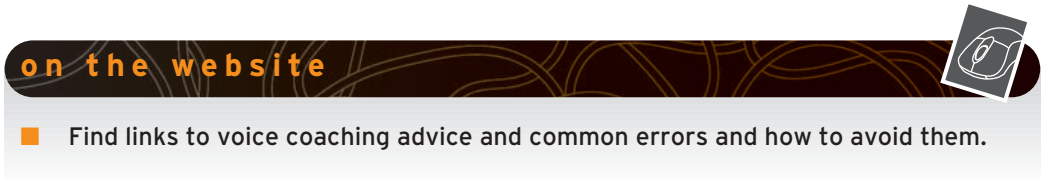
You don't have to be good looking, but it helps. What you should do is avoid, as far as you can, having anything in your appearance or dress that distracts the viewer.

## *A good microphone voice*

We talked briefly in Chapter Five about the basics of a good voice. Let's deal with this in more detail now.

A good microphone voice is one with richness, depth and resonance. That goes for women as well as men, and means that voices that are high pitched and lacking in power do not work nearly as well.

You need to take an acting lesson, or voice training, to read really well.




- **Find links to voice coaching advice and common errors and how to avoid them.**

If you've ever noticed an actor read, followed by a non-professional, you'll hear the difference. Actors use their voice almost like a musical instrument – sorry to be pretentious – they don't gabble, they imbue the script with full and rich meaning. They learn to emphasise, to fit pace to words and generally make the most of the text.

## *How fast to read*

In broadcasting, there is a wide variety of reading speeds, depending on whether you are doing a bulletin for a fast-paced pop station or a serious news channel. The word-per-minute count can be anything from 140 to 220. A good average for radio is 180 wpm, or three words a second. TV can be a little slower.

Knowing how many words you need per second is the vital building block when you are writing a script and timing material.

You might introduce a video report with a 20-second, 60-word cue. A 30-second clip of audio or video is going to be about 90 words.

If you are struggling to deliver your script clearly at the speed required, practise by slowing things right down. Read the script at a pace that you feel comfortable with, that allows you to form the words correctly. Tape yourself and listen back. Work on the points you recognise are unclear. Get others to critique your performance. As you get more confident, speed things up until you get to the right pace.

## *Here are some common problems and how to tackle them*

*Articulation*

Speech impediments can be a problem although minor ones can be overcome – look at Jonathan Ross. Where they are a problem for the presenter is where they affect clarity, for example if you pronounce your THs as Vs. In her advice on how to speak clearly, US voice coach Ann S. Utterback warns about the erosion of consonants in words:

**http://newslab.org/articles/speakclearly.htm**

She says: "This erosion can turn the word 'centre' into 'sinner' or 'ask' into 'ass'."

You must articulate words correctly. That means, she says, using our articulators – lips, teeth, tongue and jaw – to enunciate the individual sounds, the phonemes in a word, and form each word correctly. She says correct enunciation is vital because "intelligibility, credibility, and precision of pronunciation are all linked".

Often the endings of words are blurred or left off. That affects understanding. This is what she recommends:

**Try taking some copy home and marking all the ending plosive sounds (/t/ /d/, /p/ /b/, /k/ /g/) with a highlighter. These sounds should have an explosion of air when they are produced correctly. Practice by over-pronouncing these endings. When you practice in an overdone way, your brain registers the new, precise articulation more readily.**

**I don't suggest marking ending consonants on your actual on-air script because it may cause you to sound overly precise. The goal is to sound conversational while articulating most of the ending consonant plosive sounds.**

**on the website**

- Find links to a range of additional tutorials and resources covering voice.

### *Warming up your voice*

Utterback recommends you stretch your facial muscles by opening your mouth wide and moving your jaw from left to right. Hum or sing. Go through the vocal range from high to low and back again.

### *Breathing*

Good breathing improves your voice. It should be deep – from right down in the lungs – not short and shallow. Sitting cramped or hunched makes it harder to breathe properly. Sit upright, with your back straight. Using your full lung capacity gives you plenty of air in reserve as you read. You have the capacity to pause, to emphasise and not run out of breath mid-sentence or mid-clause.

Take a couple of deep breaths before you start, and another deep one between stories. The time it takes to do so is a sufficient pause between items. You can take a quick breath at a full stop and a shallow one at a comma. Such breathing works with the rhythm of your bulletin. After all, a comma is designed to indicate a short pause and a full stop a bigger one. They organise our words on the page, and we can use correct breathing and pausing to organise our words as we read a bulletin.

You might take a tip from good public speakers, and replace or overlay conventional punctuation with slashes.

### *Pauses and emphasis*

It works like this. Here's a complex passage from President John F. Kennedy's inaugural speech:

**Now the trumpet summons us again – not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are; but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation" – a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself.**

The speech is easier to read if you put a slash (/) between words where a pause is needed. It can be used alongside or in place of commas, semi-colons, colons and full stops, but it can also be used for points where a pause for emphasis would help the delivery of the item.

And you can use one / for the shortest pause, // for a slightly longer one and /// for the longest. Think of them as units of pause, and adapt them to the speed you are required to read at.

Do that and the speech looks like this:

**Now the trumpet summons us again// not as a call to bear arms/ though arms we need// not as a call to battle/ though embattled we are// but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle/ year in and year out/ "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation"// a struggle against the common enemies of man// tyranny/ poverty/ disease/ and war itself.///**

Let's face it, conventional punctuation is designed for silent reading, and may not work nearly as well for spoken reading. The slash system works better for that.

It's also a good idea to read your script through to identify points of emphasis. You want your delivery to be conversational, but with a few enhancements. Stresses on important words will help.

Go through your script and decide on the words you need to emphasise to keep what you read interesting and easy to understand. You need to find the essential words in your script – the ones that, when emphasised, give the gist of the story and make the meaning crystal clear. Either mark these words with an underscore or put them in capitals.

The words that need to be stressed are often known as the operative words. You should:

- Raise or lower the volume of your voice when speaking the operative words
- Alter your pitch on these words, going either up or down the scale a notch
- Alter your rhythm, pausing either before or after the operative word.

Change speed as you read. Keep your speed up as you move through less important information, but slow down when you get to the key bit that needs emphasis.

### *Pitch*

Pitch is the ups and downs your voice takes as you read through a sentence – again to aid meaning. If you've ever listened to the football results being read out you may have noticed that the announcer tends to read the winning team's name on an upward pitch, peaking at

the goals scored. The losing team's name is read on a downward pitch, with the score being at the lowest point. Try it out:

**Chelsea, 3, Manchester United, 1**

or:

**Chelsea, 1, Manchester United, 3**

If you haven't noticed this, look out for it next time. You'll find you can predict who has won by the pitch the reader uses.

Sentences usually begin on a rising pitch, ascending to the middle of the sentence, and then take a downward pitch to the end. So you go up a hill, pause on the flat top, then roll down the other side. In some cultures a rising pitch is common at the end of the sentence – which can make each one sound like a question.

### *Projection*

Telling a story with your voice is about more than just reading it out. The best scripts don't sound as if they are scripts at all – rather, they sound as if the speaker is ad-libbing. Projection is not about shouting, but it is about pitching your voice with strength. Think of your job as lifting the story off the page and projecting it through the radio, the TV screen or that tiny online video interface. You must overcome the constraints of the funnel you have to speak through, and get right to your listener's ear. Deep breathing and speaking from the diaphragm will help, as will the other elements we have analysed above.

## *Microphone technique for audio*

Get too close to your microphone and you get a nasty popping noise as you speak. If you are wearing headphones you'll hear it, and can either move a little away from the mic or turn it slightly to one side. A god mic distance is about 15 cm.

Getting close to the mic can help if you have a weak voice.

Paper rustling will also be picked up by your mic. Picking up your script and flipping through its pages will be picked up. But how do you avoid it? You could keep the script flat on the table, but if you do your head is facing down and your voice can become muffled – and you

will undo the good work we put in just now on projecting and keeping your voice strong. To avoid it, lift each sheet from your script as you come to read from it, and hold it between fingers and thumb at the bottom of the sheet, folding it slightly to keep it upright. As you near the end of the sheet transfer it to your left hand – or to your right if you are left handed – and pick up the next one. Don't put the first sheet down until you are reading from the second. And so on.

### *Using an autocue*

With video you will want to dispense with a script completely. If your institution has a fully equipped studio then an autocue will be available which projects your script onto an area close to the camera and scrolls through it as you read.

If you don't have one, or if you want to practise reading bulletins, there are a number of free software applications that turn your computer screen into an autocue.

**on the website**

- **Find links to a couple of free autocue applications.**

16C4

## Creating a magazine-style video programme

In a magazine video programme you are likely to have a number of items. There may be some pre-recorded elements, and there is likely to be an interview or discussion element. To front up a programme like this needs confidence and skill. It's a big step on from handling a three-minute bulletin. It also requires resources. You need a plausible-looking studio set. And you need a team of people with a range of skills: director, producer, a couple of cameramen, plus sound, light and editing.

I spoke to Philip Smith, head of digital content at Haymarket Brand Media and Brand Republic, who organises and presents web programmes on BrandRepublic.tv.

## on the website

- Find a video interview with Philip, plus the bulletin we discuss and a link to the BrandRepublic.tv archive.

BrandRepublic describes itself as "the home of the advertising, media and marketing communities online. BrandRepublic.tv brings the issues at the heart of those sectors alive with a series of monthly video bulletins." On screen, Philip introduces a bulletin saying it is "The show which reviews the things everybody in advertising, marketing and media are talking about".

BrandRepublic.tv is among the most professional web-based magazine programming. It uses professional studio facilities and has a set with red sofas and posters of famous commercials that is as slick as any on TV. Its programmes, which average 20 minutes, have a strong visual element. The one Philip had just created when we spoke was titled "How Hovis returned to TV triumphant".

Hovis had done so with an impressive £15 million commercial. It lasts 122 seconds, one for each year the brand has been on the market. It tells the simple story of a boy popping to the corner shop for a loaf of bread, but while he starts out 122 years ago, time ticks forward as the ad runs, through seven different historical periods. So he goes through the World Wars I and II, the swinging sixties, ugly eighties and, in the final seconds, he arrives in the present. The idea was to show that, while things have changed a great deal, Hovis as a brand is timeless.

Philip took me through the process of creating such a programme. First comes the idea, and that needs to be something highly visual: a story that can be told well with the use of video. He stresses that the correct approach to creating such a programme is not to start with a story and decide how to tell it, but to start with the requirements of the medium. He needs stories for which good visuals are available, and a plus is that they won't be told by anyone else. So, with Hovis, they had the ad and they had footage shot on location while the ad was being filmed. This was something that viewers would not see elsewhere.

Such exclusivity is key, and was built into the planning process for BrandRepublic.tv:

**We said to a lot of advertising agencies "what have you got that we don't normally see?" What you may not know is that, with a lot of ad agencies, they will be shooting behind the scenes when they are filming on location for a big production like Hovis, so there is some great footage of the extras and how this street was set up for the ad, and this incredible time-travelling event and how they brought all that together.**

**In the days of just print you wouldn't necessarily see that video. It would only be available in the agency or on the director's show reel, so only certain key people in the industry would see it.**

**Once we knew that was available: there's an award-winning ad, there's some footage you can't see elsewhere, you can get the people involved, and there's our show. But the big thing is we are telling a story that can't really be told in a different medium.**

Philip stresses that if compelling visual material is not available, there is no point trying to tell a story – however good it might be and relevant to the audience – using the medium of video.

Knowing that he has the constituent elements he needs, Philip writes his script. He uses a format similar to that outlined above, with words and video inserts both presented, but says: "Don't be too rigid with the script is my advice and my experience."

With this programme the segments he uses are, in order: the ad, a studio discussion, footage shot on location while the ad was being shot, and more discussion. Philip then writes his introduction to the programme, his links between the elements and his final comments. While he sticks to his linking parts of his script closely, he will be flexible with the interview, ready to ask supplementary questions picking up on things the interviewee has said, and also to cut questions if they are no longer necessary or if a long answer to a previous one has meant time is pressing.

Then he'll show his script to the director, who will tell him if it is too wordy, and who can plan how he is going to film things. They tend to use two cameras, one on Philip, one on the guests, and mix general shots with MCUs of the person speaking.

There is an autocue, but Philip does not rely on it. He does, however, have a clipboard with his script on it, and the director talking in his ear to keep him on track.

The show is shot as live and, says Philip: "It's very rare that we will go back and re-record anything. We'll only do that if I need to sharpen something up, improve the pace."

The video inserts are not screened during the recording, which gives a chance to tell the guests if they are going to come to them next.

Once filming is complete, an editor will do an initial edit, which Philip will look over and amend if needs be.

I asked Philip if he aimed for broadcast standard on BrandRepublic.tv and he said:

**We were very conscious that this had to be shot in a professional setting, in a studio-type environment, because of the calibre of the guests and the conversations we wanted to have with them.**

We've tended in the trade press to think about our stories in terms of how they look on the page. When you start thinking about video you have to really start thinking about how you tell a story visually. It's not just about a video anymore, it's also about is there footage, is there real video we can put in there. And, of course, something like Hovis lends itself to that because it had a very exciting ad that broke a few boundaries, that a lot of people in the industry were talking about. So we were able to show the creative, show behind the scenes of the making of the ad – that's something that we just couldn't do in print before.

According to Philip, the studio discussion is there "to bring those ideas to life":

And often, thinking about the stars in an industry, it's actually intensely powerful to bring that person to life with video, because you see when he really does mean something, you can hear him actually explain it, and he does talk to you in a very different way than when you see the words reproduced in black and white.

Philip says that producing such packages is demanding:

If you feel that your video needs to be of a studio-based variety, you will need people who know what a good studio is, people who can operate at least two cameras, people who can edit well, and you will need all of those so-called TV production skills.

That said, my broadcast training was a long long time ago, and while I made sure that I was up to speed with my presenting skills, you also need people around you who say that works, or that doesn't work. So yes, it's a big team, and you do need to take the best from it.

You don't always need the big production but, for this project, we felt we did.

So here's what you need:

- A studio and set
- A team with the skills of director, producer (Philip says that, with his films, producer and director are pretty much the same thing), camera, light and sound, and editing
- A script that your director can discuss with you, amend and work from
- Compelling video to screen
- Authoritative studio guests.

16C5

## Free video to use when practising creating bulletins

If you lack footage for a video bulletin or magazine programme, there are a couple of very useful sources of material that you can take and re-edit and build a bulletin around.

### *Al Jazeera*

Al Jazeera was the first news organisation to release its footage under the Creative Commons 3.0 Attribution licence, which allows commercial and non-commercial use. As long as you follow certain conditions, you can re-edit, repackage and publish it on your own website or blog. So you could take several of their videos, edit them, revoice the commentaries and write and deliver links between them. It's very useful if you want readily available video footage to practise creating bulletins.

**on the website**

- Find links to Al Jazeera video you can re-edit for your own bulletins.

### *Free BBC technology programming for re-editing and distribution*

The BBC also allows you to take certain material and re-edit it, although at the time of writing the service was in its early stages. More simply, the BBC allows you to embed all its videos in your own site. You can't re-edit them, but you could use them to practise scripting a bulletin.

**on the website**

- Find links to the BBC's explanation of what you can do with material, and to its guidance on embedding video.

### *And finally . . .*

If you are frustrated at the loss of quality your video suffers when uploaded to YouTube or via your blog or website, there are free high-definition video upload services available. One such is Vimeo:

**http://vimeo.com**

16C6

## Exercises and projects

### Exercise 1

Look at a wide range of online video bulletins. Assess what they get right and what can be improved. Look at the following:

- News selection
- Studio setting
- The presenter's appearance
- The quality of the presenter's reading
- The editing of the bulletin.

### Exercise 2

Look at a range of online magazine programmes and carry out a similar exercise to the one above on bulletins.

### Projects

1 Either working individually or as part of a team, set up a weekly news bulletin for your website. Establish its purpose and develop an editorial policy for it. Gather material, either from that generated for the projects you are working on or by reworking other content.

2 Develop your skills as a presenter. Follow the guidance in this chapter and have colleagues critique your performance.

3 Create a format for a magazine-style programme. Determine the staffing it requires and the roles individuals should fill. It should include a studio discussion and one or more filmed inserts. Plan, record, present, edit and publish a programme.

chapter seventeen

# *The future: Web 3.0*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

- An assessment of how the web will develop in the future
- The developments that point the way forward.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- Regular updates on this fast-moving area
- Masterclasses on Web 3.0.

## Web 3.0

First, what is it with all this 3.0 business? And where did 1.0 and 2.0 get to? The numbers are a way of charting the development of the web.

### *Web 1.0 was about commerce*

Commerce was the driver in the early days of the web. This was the time when online institutions, including Amazon and eBay, were created.

### *Web 2.0 was about community*

Community sites, including MySpace and Facebook and hundreds more, often niche players, drove development.

### *Web 3.0 will be about joined-up thinking*

Actually, at the time of writing (December 2009) no one can be entirely sure of what Web 3.0 will be like, but the simplest way of looking at the developments that will shape it is to say that they bring things together.

Because the web is so useful we tend to enjoy its benefits without looking too closely at what could be done to make it better. Let's face it, it's pretty disjointed at present: the fact that you have to go to one place for content, another for community and another for commerce. Okay, many organisations are aware of this and are trying to knit the three together, and in doing that they are ushering in Web 3.0, the web of connectedness.

Let me quote from an incisive article at PCMag.com, which is linked to from the website and which offers four pictures of the way Web 3.0 will develop. They are outlined below.

#### *The semantic web*

This is a web in which machines can read sites as easily as we can. They can compare and connect, pulling information from several and bringing it together in ways that make our lives easier. The simple example PCMag gives is this: "You ask your machine to check your schedule against the schedules of all the dentists and doctors within a 10-mile radius – and it obeys."

There are many more ways this interconnectivity can help us – particularly as journalists and in reaching our audience – and we'll look at this in a lot more detail shortly.

### *The 3D web*

This is a web you can enter by slipping on a suitable headset. So from your armchair you can go shopping, travel geographically or through time. You could create a Second Life-style world where you can interact with others and do – virtually – pretty much everything you do in the real world.

### *The media-centric web*

This is a web where you can search not just with words but with all other media. A photograph of a favourite painting entered into a search engine brings you hundreds of similar paintings you may also like. Searches could be done with sound, video, anything.

### *The pervasive web*

This is a web that's everywhere. So not just your PC is online, every device you use is too. So your fridge orders the food you are running out of from the online supermarket and checks your diary to ensure it is delivered at a time when you will be at home. Your garden irrigation system checks the forecast to see whether it needs to water the plants. Your windows do the same to decide when to open.

Let's look in more detail at the elements that Web 3.0 brings together. For this I'm quoting from Sramana Mitra, an entrepreneur, strategy consultant and author in the technology business:

**http://www.sramanamitra.com/**

She sees 3.0 as bringing together and developing everything from Webs 1.0 and 2.0 – content, commerce and community, or what she calls the 3Cs, and adding to it a fourth C – context.

She says it also brings personalisation, plus vertical search. So, if you like equations it looks like this: **Web 3.0 = (4C + P + VS)**.

Vertical search has been under development by some during Web 2.0, and we looked at it in Chapter Twelve. Vertical search, unlike Google, which searches across the web, drills down into a niche area. Mitra gives the example of Sidestep (**http://www.sidestep.com/**), which bills itself as "the traveller's search engine".

Personalisation has been limited because of the lack of an appropriate context (the fourth C) within which to develop it.

Mitra says:

In Web 3.0, I predict, we are going to start seeing roll-ups. We will see a trunk that emerges from the **Context**, be it film (Netflix), music (iTunes), cooking/food, working women, single parents, and assembles the Web 3.0 formula that addresses the whole set of needs of a consumer **in that Context**.

She gives this example of how it would work:

**Context:** I am a petite woman, dark skinned, dark haired, brown eyed. I have a distinct personal style, and only certain designers resonate with it.

**Commerce:** I want my personal SAKS Fifth Avenue which carries clothes by those designers, in my size.

**Content:** I want my personal *Vogue*, which covers articles about that style, those designers, and other emerging ones like them.

**Community:** I want to exchange notes with others of my size-shape-style-psychographic and discover what else looks good. I also want the recommendation system to tell me what they're buying.

**Personalisation and vertical search:** There are also some basic principles of what looks good based on skin tone, body shape, hair colour, eye colour . . . I want the search engine to be able to filter and match based on an algorithm that builds on this knowledge base.

## What Web 3.0 means to publishers and journalists

Clearly content is still very valuable. High-quality, reliable, well-informed and trustworthy content will be of great value to an individual, as part of a coherent and rewarding online experience. What is vital is that we get our material into that C-for-content element of the overall package. If it's not us but a rival, we have been left on the outside of a viable and lucrative collaborative venture.

Sites without content are unsatisfying. I like Lovefilm because the reviews are from *Time Out*. I don't like the reviews on Amazon because I've no real idea where they are from. Some content built around the music I like to listen to on Spotify would make my experience on the free music site complete.

Of the four visions of 3.0 outlined earlier on, it is the semantic web that gives multimedia journalists the most obvious home. Let's think a bit more about what the semantic web is.

We can think of it as a web of data – data that a computer can read, compare, combine and sift to make it relevant for us. There is a lot of unconnected data that we use every day and which is not on the web. If it were, that could be very useful. For example, I can store my photographs online, and I can keep an online appointments diary, but I can't see my photographs in my diary. I can look at my bank statements online, but they aren't connected to my appointments diary so I can see what I spent where. I can't bring this data together because it is controlled by individual applications and they don't communicate.

The semantic web is partly about all those techies getting together and agreeing common formats for integrating data from a wide range of sources. So, whereas the earlier stages of the web were about documents – finding them, exchanging them – 3.0 will be about smaller units of data, and how they relate to all sorts of other bits of data. If that happens, I can search through, and combine relevant bits from, an unending string of databases and build up a complete picture.

Tim Berners Lee, the inventor of the World Wide Web, had this to say about the semantic web:

> **I have a dream for the web [in which computers] become capable of analysing all the data on the web – the content, links, and transactions between people and computers. A semantic web, which should make this possible, has yet to emerge, but when it does, the day-to-day mechanisms of trade, bureaucracy and our daily lives will be handled by machines talking to machines. The "intelligent agents" people have touted for ages will finally materialise.**
>
> **(quoted from Tim Berners Lee's Wikipedia entry)**

As consumers of this data – and as journalists – we don't need to worry about how they will do that, we just need it to work.

Talk of Web 3.0 can easily get theoretical and hard to relate to the concrete. An article by Colin Meek on Journalism.co.uk does a great job of showing what it means for journalists:

**http://www.journalism.co.uk/5/articles/532631.php**

"Journalists", it says, "use the internet to network, research, communicate and monitor web content. Tools for all of these tasks are being transformed with the emergence of semantic technology and the evolution of the semantic web."

The article goes on to suggest that the best way to understand this process is to think of it as linking up various self-contained clouds of information:

**Flight times, weather forecasts, social network bookmarks and news stories are all delivered in different formats and readable only by different applications. The semantic web is an engineering solution that will allow this data to be meshed and available for use by machines globally.**

We can think of our journalistic content as being one of these clouds. There is a lot we can do already to offer pieces of our cloud more widely. That's why publishers set up YouTube channels or Twitter their breaking-news headlines. In the future, wisps of our cloud will be spun up with other pieces of information from all over the web into a very highly personalised candy floss made to suit an individual.

If *Vogue*'s verdict on skirt lengths matters to you, you'll get it along with chat about those skirt lengths, a range of labels and where you can buy them, plus video of the clothes being modelled, which might come from *Vogue* or from some other provider.

If you are buying a car and like *Top Gear*'s car reviews plus *Autocar*'s buyer's guide and need to know about places near you where the car you are interested in is on sale at a discount, that material can be plucked from different clouds and brought together. You could also have finance information, insurance quotes and great drives to take delivered however you want it, on your phone or PC, and in the appropriate multimedia combination of mapping, video, audio, stills and text.

What this means is that the content we produce as journalists has very many different uses. It can be cut and sliced many different ways. The one piece of information, the one sentence, that matters to an individual user gets to them; the stuff that is not relevant does not.

It means that while we are still creating well-crafted packages – be they in text, audio or video format – we are also creating material that can be broken up and repackaged.

This means our content is becoming more granular. It's not a sugar lump, it's grains of sugar. Not only is our material becoming granular, so is the whole publishing process – but that's something I'll come on to in Chapter Eighteen.

The Journalism.co.uk article I quoted above gives a listing of applications that give a clue as to what the web will be like in five years' time. Let's look at a few of them.

## *OpenID*

**http://openid.net/**

They say: "OpenID is a free and easy way to use a single digital identity across the Internet."

One of the big bugbears about being active online is remembering all the different log-on details you have given for each site. With OpenID you can use one log-in at 10,000 sites.

People are already creating identities for themselves whether it be at their blog, photostream, profile page, etc. With OpenID you can easily transform one of these existing URLs into an account which can be used at sites which support OpenID logins.

If you have a Blogger, AOL, Technorati or many other accounts, you already have an OpenID.

## *Friend of a Friend (FOAF)*

The FOAF project is still under development at the time of writing, and techies will feel more at home delving into it than the less technically able, but, in a nutshell, FOAF is about, to use their own words, "creating a web of machine-readable pages describing people, the links between them and the things they create and do". This Wikipedia entry has a lot of technical detail:

**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FOAF_(software)**

## *Semantically-Interlinked Online Communities (SIOC)*

**http://sioc-project.org/**

Journalism.co.uk illuminates further:

FOAF and SIOC are ground-breaking initiatives that give online communities the ability to share data in ways that computers across the globe can understand.

FOAF gives us the chance to, for example, use our profile data from one site to create our identity on another. It also may mean that we will be able to make better use of our information from various sites by meshing it together in one identity.

SIOC is creating the language necessary to allow online community sites to do the same. Social networks, discussion groups and bloggers currently function like islands where the information in their databases is isolated. SIOC will enable community sites to merge their data.

A practical consequence of SIOC might be that you can do a search in Facebook using the term "bog-snorkelling" and get results back from within that site, but also blog results from Technorati, comments from Flickr albums and YouTube videos.

John Breslin, the founder of the SIOC, told Journalism.co.uk: "In the semantic web, it is not just people who are connected together in some meaningful way, but documents, events, places, hobbies, pictures, you name it! And it is the commercial applications that exploit these connections that are now becoming interesting."

## *Searching for an image with an image*

**http://www.like.com/**

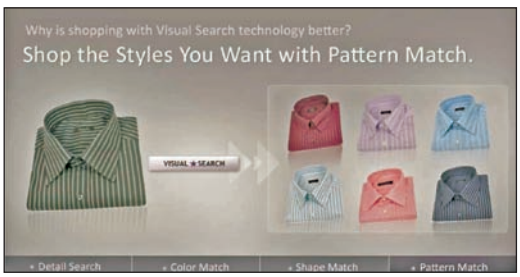
Like.com is a shopping site that enables search through images. They say:

Like.com is the first true visual search engine, where the contents of photos are used to search and retrieve similar items.

We believe that there are literally millions of items that are difficult to describe via text-based search and where individual tastes are all over the map – think of your favourite pair of earrings or shoes and what an ordeal it can be to find something new but in a similar style.

We created Like.com to solve the challenge of finding "the perfect you" for a broad range of aesthetic and soft goods.

Like.com utilises our Likeness Technology to create a digital signature that describes the photo's contents and enables a more accurate search for similar-looking items and products.


Why is shopping with Visual Search technology better?
Shop the Styles You Want with Pattern Match.
VISUAL ★ SEARCH
• Detail Search
• Color Match
• Shape Match
• Pattern Match

So if the grey stripy shirt looks almost right but not quite, you search for similar shirts using images rather than trying to describe your ideal shirt in words.

## *Twine.com*

**http://www.twine.com**

Twine is a search engine and a social networking site all in one. Colin Meek says that, for journalists, it is "Facebook on steroids". Twine, according to the site blurb, is: "A new way to collect content and connect with people who share your interests. Use Twine to track, find, and share what interests you. Twine ties it all together by topic, so you can have it in one place."

Using it feels like using a search engine and a social networking site at the same time. You begin with a search term, or something as broad as an area of interest, and get a wide range of results and can narrow them down from there. Twine recommends connections with other members, other items users have saved and Twines (which are both threads of interesting items you have found and groups of people with interests in common), based on your activity and things you have bookmarked. You can join groups and start your own Twines.

This won't sound particularly revolutionary, particularly if you think back to Chapter Six when we looked at Technorati, Delicious and other tagging services, and relate this to social networking site creators such as Ning.

What we are seeing here is a huge anthill of industry. Many thousands of ants have got the same idea, and are all working away in their own little bubble to make it happen. Of course, not all those who are industriously creating Web 3.0 will be rewarded by becoming the new Amazon, Facebook, Google or – indeed – a combination of all three. But someone, or a few, will. And when they do, we multimedia journalists will make sure we are using them.

## *Semantic Radar*

**https://addons.mozilla.org/es-ES/firefox/addon/3886**

This is a Firefox add-on that supports sites which contain semantic data. Click on an icon and you can explore that data further.

## *ClearForest Gnosis*

**https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/3999**

The Gnosis Firefox browser plug-in identifies key factual information on any web page you visit, and highlights terms that you might like to know more about. If you hover over the term that is highlighted a pop-up window invites you to search for that term in Google, Reuters, Wikipedia, Technorati and others.

To be quite honest I see this as a smart idea that has yet to reach its full potential but is one worth watching.

## *Open Calais*

**http://www.opencalais.com/**

Open Calais uses the same technology as Gnosis and also has the power of Thomson Reuters behind it. It offers a range of free tools for publishers, bloggers and other content providers.

It doesn't just tag content to key words, but to "the relevant people, facts, or events users are looking for". That tagged data – metadata – can be linked with other data from elsewhere in the web. It is still very much in the development stage and inviting web developers to get involved, but, once again, shows great promise.

As Colin Meek says:

> **For example, some publishers are feeding their entire historical archive of material through Calais to be tagged, which means it can be filtered and searched more easily. Although these tools aren't of immediate use to most journalists, the scale of this project reveals how many content providers are turning to this technology to make sure their content can be found in the new semantic world.**
>
> **Knowing this, journalists can exploit new tools to more effectively search for the semantic metadata.**

**on the website**

- **As will have been very clear to you in reading this chapter, the subject of Web 3.0 is very much on the cutting edge of web development, which is where the website linked to this book comes in. Check regularly with the website for how things are progressing from here; join in the conversations by adding your comments.**

chapter eighteen

# *Getting a job as a multimedia journalist*

## In the book version of this chapter we will cover:

- The essential skills of a twenty-first-century journalist
- The experience you will need to demonstrate
- How to write the perfect CV.

## In the online version of this chapter you will find:

- Links to current vacancies
- Careers masterclasses.

## The skills any employer will expect you to have

In this final chapter we'll round things off with a look at the skills and experience you'll need to demonstrate in order to get work – whether it is a staff job or as a freelance. Multimedia skills are highly valued in all branches of the media. Hopefully, this book and the course you are following will have made you eminently employable as a multimedia journalist.

But the media have suffered a great deal in the past couple of years. Once-profitable media groups have been hit hard by a collapse in advertising accompanying the international financial upheaval that began in 2008. Many publications have folded, or gone online-only; broadcasters have cut back on local news; staffs have been slashed. Fewer trainees are taken on, and many more journalists work as freelances.

Journalism never was a nine-to-five job, and now the demands it makes on anyone who wants to make a living out of it are enormous. A graduate on a course I teach said she felt that she hadn't entered a career; she'd embarked on a way of life. I thought that was very perceptive. So did a prospective employer, and she landed a job before she had finished the course.

The multimedia journalist really does need to think of what they have embarked upon as a lifestyle. You need to enjoy the job, the way it is done and to see the need to be pretty much constantly connected online to the areas you are covering as stimulating, rather than a stressful burden.

You may get a staff job, but it is increasingly likely that you will be freelance, and that really does mean living by your wits. If you use all the techniques to keep in touch, and all the multimedia skills to find and create stories, then you are maximising your chances of getting a job or, if freelance, producing material publishers want to buy. Also, we can see being freelance as an opportunity to work in a way that is more suited to the multimedia world. This is a very different way of thinking of the media industries and how they support us as journalists, but we can look to other creative industries which are further down the digital road to find models of how things will be for us.

Let's take the music industry as an example. In the music industry, the major labels' struggles to stay profitable, and relevant, are even more desperate than those in the newspaper industry. Some of their major stars are deciding that they don't need the publishing and promotion services of the label. Many labels are deciding they can't support acts that don't bring home the bacon. Many acts are deciding that the MySpace/YouTube route to a public is the one for them. Consumers, who used to shell out for physical products, are much less willing to do so. Increasingly, they buy (or otherwise acquire) a track or two electronically. Even performers who have been selling millions of CDs – and some who continue to do so – are questioning whether recorded music can be sold at all.

We don't know how all this is going to shake down yet, but we do know that things are becoming more granular. Individual tracks by individual artists come to individual listeners' attention through the web. Those listeners browse around, pick up recommendations from

others, get passed clips that online friends think they might like, and develop their own, often idiosyncratic webs of consumption.

Has all of this any relevance at all to the humble – or not so humble – hack? I found myself recently talking to a room of writers who – in newspaper terms – are the equivalent of the big acts on EMI or any of the other now-shaky monoliths of the music industry. Although it didn't seem to have occurred to most of them, their relationships with their publishers could be undergoing a sea-change.

Let's start from the consumer end. Consumers of news, opinion, analysis, comment and debate are also beginning to take a much more granular approach to that consumption. Where once most readers read a daily newspaper that provided their main source of news and comment, now – online – they can pick and choose from the full range of available publications as widely and as often as they like.

Most publications have a handful of big names – their Coldplays and Madonnas – whose names sell many copies of that newspaper or magazine. Ask any loyal reader why they buy a publication and they'll usually tell you that, apart from liking the general politics, tone, image of it, they love to read writers X or Y or Z. Now they can have X,Y and Z without buying the physical product, and also browse around all the other letters of the star-writer alphabet, irrespective of where they are published – and for free.

My room full of Coldplays and Madonnas – I can't tell you their names because we were under the Chatham House rule – were unconvinced. They could not envisage a time when they would not need their publisher to pay them, distribute them and give them a platform.

But then an editor present mentioned a big star who wasn't there and who is creating his own website, independent of his traditional media publisher. This person is easily better known than the paper he writes for. The assembled print celebs were quick to point out that there was one rule for megastars, another for mere stars like them.

So maybe only the really big stars can break loose from their labels? No. Today, alternative publishing platforms are easily created. Anyone could use Ning or Magnify or numerous other free software platforms – or have something bespoke built for them by a web developer. Alternative ways of finding the stars are being developed all the time. Almost any blog offers such a platform, with its links to people the writer thinks his or her readers would be interested in.

Some platforms – such as Arts and Letters Daily at **www.aldaily.com** – look very traditional, but are very good at linking to a wide range of writers that its audience may not have heard of but who they will find interesting. It also provides a one-stop-shop for those looking for opinion and comment of a particular kind. The audience know that they can keep tabs on several dozen prominent writers who are published in a score of different traditional media outlets, by coming to this one place.

Such aggregating sites perform a valuable service in bypassing the online versions of trad media and gathering writing of a particular kind under one roof.

All the reader needs to do is find the roof that is right for them.

And that strikes me as the alternative publishing platform that will work in future for the many stars and less-than-stars who currently can't eat without a media mogul's path to market.

I was struck by a comment on Mindy McAdams's blog (**www.mindymcadams.com**) about why newspapers still have a future. She was quoting a retiring journalism professor who said: "The hunter-gatherer model of journalism is no longer sufficient. Citizens can do their own hunting and gathering on the Internet. What they need is somebody to add value to that information by processing it – digesting it, organizing it, making it usable."

That's what the new breed of online, aggregating publishers are beginning to do. It's also what we have been doing in this book, as an integral part of learning to become multimedia journalists.

Here is a comment from one young journalist – Sarah Lacy – which appeared on her blog (**www.sarahlacy.com**) and illustrates how the modern multimedia journalism lifestyle works:

**I'm more successful working for myself than I was on staff for just one publication: income, name recognition, opportunities, amazing once-in-a-lifetime experiences. And, while I'm not immune, I'm safer heading into this downturn than in the past because all my income doesn't hinge on one gig. In terms of journalism, it's way more successful. I have the challenge only to find great stories and tell them. And generally any story I love, I've got a platform for it.**

The equipment that is now available to us makes it possible to be a very effective one-man-band. Reuters has created what it describes as a studio in a suitcase. Chris Cramer, Reuters global editor of multimedia, told *Press Gazette*:

**Smart journalists are going to realise we don't have an option to do one thing. We need to get the skills to work in media and not just one form of media. It doesn't mean we can't specialise in writing or we can't specialise in camera work . . . But successful journalists in the future are going to have to be able to cope with a variety of media and publishing roles.**

Haymarket, one of the largest and most innovative of British publishers, has a clear idea of the skills journalists now need. When I worked with them to develop multimedia training for their staffs this was the list of requirements they showed me:

**The twenty-first-century journalist must be able to:**

- Write news *and* feature copy for print *and* online
- Visualise stories for magazine and web packaging, and interplay between the two media
- Write a blog
- Sub-edit news *and* feature copy for print *and* online
- Record an interview for audio or video
- Record a stand-up piece to camera and edit a video or audio package for publication
- Use a content management system
- Be an active participant in their own community online and spot and defuse flash-points and moderation issues
- Be able to understand and implement SEO and tagging
- Be flexible with writing structures online – news blogging, not just news article writing.

If you have worked your way through this book you can tick all those boxes, which means that, if you turn up for an interview at a Haymarket title, you could well be one of the people they are looking for.

Tom Glocer, chief executive of Thomson Reuters, had this to say about the future of newspapers, and journalists' roles 30 years hence, on his blog at **www.tomglocer.com**. In the post he was seeking to clarify his views, after much confused comment developed on other blogs:

> my answer to a somewhat unrelated question on the future of newspapers has been ricocheting in an increasingly inaccurate way across the blogosphere. I did, in fact, imagine a future (again 30 years hence) when a newspaper (in my example my hometown *New York Times*) could employ only 60 journalists rather than the hundreds who work there today. In my example, I challenged our conception of what a newspaper must include and imagined my theoretically ideal paper which combined *New York Times* content on the Middle East, the FT on Europe, the *Wall Street Journal* or Reuters for finance, ESPN for sports and so on. The web, of course, already makes such a mash-up possible today either through browser tabs or RSS feeds.
>
> In this sort of disaggregated world, the NYT would not need a staff of hundreds to produce a fully integrated newspaper, any more than Apple needs to manufacture its own hard drives or touch screens. I imagined that to really focus on one or two core strengths that it could do better than any other publication, the *Times* might need 30 star journalists – the Tom Friedmans and William Safires, a couple of great editors, and then an up and coming group (or farm system) of 30 junior staff who could grow into the next generation of stars. I readily admit this would be much different from our current view of what a newspaper should look like, but ironically this alternative reality is not so far removed from that apparently described by the great *Times* editor Max Frankel in a memo to management several years ago.

Even if this vision of a more open and interoperable newspaper were financially viable, it will be difficult for the current generation of integrated papers to get there. I know from painful personal experience at Reuters that it is much easier to build new from zero to 60 staff than to reduce 1000 to 60. Moreover, there is no reason to believe (just because I came up with a low number to be intentionally provocative) that the "right" number is not 200 or 300. The principle, however, is the same. When I fly on American Airlines, I am actually pleased they feature Starbucks coffee rather than American Airlines coffee. I don't want Starbucks baristas flying or maintaining the 777, but I see no reason other than inertia why every function must be staffed by "insiders."

The modern digital world is increasingly frictionless. This requires every company that wishes to survive and prosper to really understand and focus on its core competence. To repeatedly ask "what do we do better than anyone else? What defines us?" At Thomson Reuters, some of our businesses used to build their own computer hardware and operate communications networks, but these are not our core skill set. Today we still build our own editing systems, but likely not for ever. Newspapers are glorious, fabled institutions which serve an important civic role, but that does not give them a perpetual bye to avoid change and reinvention like the rest of us.

**on the website**

- Find links to a wide range of other talking points about multimedia journalists, their role and advice on getting a job.

## The experience you'll need to demonstrate

You'll need to have done lots of work experience. No one will employ you on the strength of your degree alone. You should have done a wide range of work experience during school and university. This is essential to demonstrate a genuine, longstanding commitment to a career as a journalist. If you took a gap year, then solid stints of relevant work experience during that time are very useful.

Local newspapers often insist that your course be accredited by the National Council for the Training of Journalists and that you have passed their preliminary level qualification as a part of that course.

## *The perfect CV*

The perfect CV fits on one side of an A4 sheet. It is laid in the following sections:

- Name and contact details
- Journalism course details
- Relevant work experience
- Previous education
- Hobbies and interests.

An employer wants to see a course dedicated to practical journalism. Media Studies courses are all well and good, but don't expect them to get you a job as a journalist. The course should have equipped you with all the skills mentioned by Haymarket, and which we have covered in this book.

Your work experience should demonstrate that you have pursued your interest in journalism in practical ways, and over several years. If you have completed placements on a mix of websites, local newspapers, magazines, radio or TV stations, you prove you really do want to do the job and know what it entails. If a couple of those who gave you a chance will write you references, even better.

Your education can show an aptitude for pretty much anything: arts, sciences, it doesn't matter. But if you are applying for a job where your degree is relevant, make something of that.

Your hobbies and interests don't matter too much either, but if they are away from journalism that shows you understand that it isn't the only thing worth doing with your time. And if you have a hobby that is a talking point, great – an interviewer wants to find something to chat to you about at the start of the interview, and a hobby might give them an easy way in.

Your CV comes with a short covering letter. On one side of A4 you should say why you want the job and also present some ideas – things that you'd be offering on the website today, or for the print publication, radio or TV station. If it's a general news site, then say exactly how you'd want to develop a current story with the use of all relevant media.

At the interview you should take a representative sample of your work. Once that would have been in the form of paper cuttings. They are fine, but you also ought to have the URL of a blog or website which you use as a shop window for your talents. Add your best work to it, and make sure there are examples of everything you can do – from writing for print, photography, video and audio packages, to presenting . . . as many different aspects of multimedia journalism as you can include.

## How you hear about jobs

You should register on and/or monitor all the relevant job sites you can find, but many jobs are never advertised. That's because the editor concerned can't face wading through literally scores if not hundreds of applications.

Many vacancies are filled when an editor is impressed by the work-placement person they have in the office. Even if there isn't a vacancy now, make an impression and they may remember you when there is one. And if you do have a good work placement, try to follow it up with freelance work – writing the odd piece, subbing, it really doesn't matter. If you can keep the connection with the title going, you stand a better chance of getting any job that does materialise.

**on the website you can:**

- Find the best places to look for jobs
- Watch out for careers masterclasses.

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